

no 55 the magazine of cinema & television fantasy 95p

STARBURST

TM



THE MAKING OF
**THE
DARK
CRYSTAL**

Paris
Film
Festival

and the honored

**CLASS
OF 1984**

Editor:
Alan McKenzie

Design:
Rahid Khan
Editorial Assistance:
Gilly Joseph
Production:
Tim Hampson
& Alison Gill
Colour:
Cheamworth Ltd
Typesetting:
London Composition
Distribution:
Comag:
Publisher:
Stan Lee:

Writers this issue:

John Brosnan
Chris Charles
Tony Crawley
Phil Edwards
Richard Holliss
Alan Jones



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THIS MONTH'S CLASSIC IS THE ACTION ADVENTURE FANTASY MASTERPIECE, THE MASK OF FU MANCHU, WHICH STARRED BORIS KARLOFF.

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As you read this in January, I am sitting at a typewriter on 16th December preparing this issue for press. This issue we have a special feature on the making of *Dark Crystal*. The film will be reviewed next month in *Starburst*, though I am assured by our regular contributors that the review will not be favourable.

We have also taken the liberty of including a colour feature on a new American exploitation picture: *The Class* of 1984. Despite the director's protests that it is a meaningful movie, Tony Crawley rightly has pegged it as an action/exploitationer. According to Phil Edwards and Alan Jones, it was one of the most enjoyable movies on show at the Paris film festival. The bad news is that it has been banned outright by the British Board of Film Censors. For any film fan, this is totally unacceptable. We are all quite capable of deciding what we want to see and what we don't want to see. And for any one to make that decision for us should be seen as a deliberate infringement of our rights as citizens of a so-called free country. But we shouldn't let it fret here. Why not drop a line to the BBFC and let them know how you feel. I'm going to.

Finally, I'd just like to send a message to those readers who seem to enjoy writing scathing criticisms of *Starburst* then at the last minute, chicken out and resist signing their names. We at *Starburst* appreciate constructive comments of any kind. But any letters that are unsigned are dropped into the oblivion of our wastepaper basket. If you feel the need to have your say at least have the courage to sign your name to the letter. And the address. And within a few days you should be receiving a visit from the lads... to talk over your grievances.

We wish all our readers a very prosperous and enjoyable New Year.

Alan McKenzie/Editor.

COUNSEL FOR THE DEFENCE

I read reader (I) Stephen Crooks letter in *Starburst* 53. Obviously some of his points are worth taking notice of, but otherwise, as you commented, it was just a rude letter.

You make your magazine for readers who enjoy news and photographs about fantasy in cinema and tv and not for analysts who are going to check that every staple isn't an inch out of place.

Starburst is a magazine designed for everyone (take the issue in which the offending letter appeared). There was the story of a director, Steven Spielberg; Reviews of horror films; An interview with an actor, Harrison Ford; and a pullout and review of the year's top fantasy film.

So overall *Starburst* is a fun magazine, yet one for people who really appreciate fantasy on screen.

If you ask me (and 99.9% of your

readers), if "this Khen person" carries on the way he's going, then everyone will be happy—not least me!

Emlyn Chesleigh,
Hendon, London.

Thank you Emlyn! Now a few extracts from the many deluge of letters we've had supporting *Starburst* magazine in *The Great Graphics Debate*...

... Is Mr Crooks a killjoy ...?

Deve Roberts,
Nottingham.

... It all boils down to this—"if you don't like what you see, then why perit with your money for it?" Those readers who offer no constructive criticism, like Stephen Crooks, I'm sure you could well do without.

(No name given),
Bristol.

The lads are on their way!

... those of us who have been with you since the early days know how justified your "self-congratulatory propaganda" is—blow your own trumpet, you deserve it! Rule: Shut up unless you have something constructive to say. I love you here we (unpretentiously) come!

Mark Barratt,
Cheshire.

Out of the many critical letters that *Starburst* receives never has one angered me as much as the crooked (pun intended) attempt by Stephen Crooks of harshly criticizing *Starburst's* layout (issue 53).

Not only was it directly rude as pointed out by editor Alan McKenzie but also in all its distribut did not offer any constructive criticism, only concerning itself with picking apart a very fine magazine. It is a letter which must not go by without a reply, and a rude one at that.

Let us start with Crooks's gripes about the 50th anniversary wording on the cover. What is wrong with a magazine announcing its own anniversary issue? Many magazines do it, *Starlog* for instance does it every year with their extra large anniversary issue.

As to the use of the word "GRAND", the mere fact that *Starburst* continues to exist, publishing yet another issue is a grand event to me. Its use on issue 50 is justified and would be so on any issue as the contents are ALWAYS great.

Just what is Mr Crooks dribbling on about when he picks on the number of the issue?

Also, what is wrong with using words like "featuring" and "plus" to announce the contents of the issue. They are perfectly correct uses of English and are not irrelevant. Nor do they make the cover untidy as Mr Crooks states. In fact, the new look *Starburst* have attracted me more than any previous issues. What other fantasy magazine gives you front and back covers with no ads?

Mr Crooks doesn't seem to be satis-

fied until he finds something wrong with everything in *Starburst*. He goes as far as to make a big deal out of something as simple as a page number! So what if *Starburst* uses a star and lines with the page number? To pick on this ludicrous and unfair. In fact *Starburst* ought to be congratulated for using such an original addition to a page number.

Next, Mr Crooks criticizes the layout of the *Blade Runner* review on pg 12-16. He makes reference of a "hunt the text" game. The only game Mr Crooks is playing is with himself. Why immediately assume the article is going to start at the top of the page. It only takes a quick glance at the page before the eye catches sight of the large prominent B signifying the start of the article.

The layout on pg 12-13 was eye-catching and colourful and was in no way untidy. I'm sure many will agree with me that photos set at different angles have much more appeal than purely horizontal, symmetrical ones.

Mr Crooks' most unfair and thoughtless comments were about the anniversary greetings on pg 38-39 of issue 50.

Mr Crooks, the impression *Starburst* has given me over the last few years is that it cares for its readers. *Starburst* is produced by a group of people, fantasy fans, who want to communicate and share their views with other fans, casually and sincerely.

The fact that *Starburst* gets anniversary greetings shows that there are people out there, not just "big names", who also recognise and care for a fine magazine. Far from resulting in an ego-trip, these greetings help build up a team spirit among the producers of not just *Starburst*, but any magazine and lead them to produce a better magazine. How would you feel Mr Crooks if on your birthday, no one came to greet you or congratulate you. Think about it.

Finally, Mr Crooks had the audacity to say that the designer of *Starburst* Rahid Khen, wasn't doing his job properly. I am surprised he did not demand to be "someone who knows what he's doing" to replace Rahid Khan.

In conclusion Mr Crooks is not the ART CRITIC he makes out to be, he is not even a critic. What he does is unfairly and fiercely attack everything, no matter how insignificant, in *Starburst*. I may have been harsh with Mr Crooks but no more than he was with *Starburst*. Keep up the good work, *Starburst*, and congratulations on your 50th anniversary issue.

Tony Smith
Foreville
S. Australia

Why on earth did you devote a whole page of your excellent magazine to some lousy in issue 53 concerning the layout of your 50th anniversary issue?

Who is Stephen Crooks anyway? Some flashy newspaper or magazine editor? Probably not.

Certainly the *Pottergeist* and *Blade Runner* articles could have been better presented visually, but as you com-

mented yourself, the letter was written in such a pompous and rude manner, that I think the one or two serious criticisms that emerged lost all credibility.

I would probably take up just as much space in your magazine questioning his countless fault-finding but I feel this is unnecessary as his oppressively flippant views are, I'm sure not shared by many (if any) of your other readers.

Still, as the saying goes, "you can please some of the people some of the time..."

I for one will be eagerly awaiting the "pretentious" grand 100th anniversary issue.



Graham Wells
Woodford Green
Essex

I am an art student specialising in graphics, so I began to read Stephen Crooks' letter concerning *Starburst's* layout with some interest. But no sooner had I started then I realised that I wasn't reading a sensible, intelligent piece of criticism but a simple list of complaints, riddled with unnecessary abuse, which lacked any conviction.

When I read the sentence "... Words like 'featuring' and 'plus' should be omitted—irrelevant," I wasn't sure whether to laugh or cry. Doesn't Mr Crooks realise that the cover's job is to reach out at potential customers and make them want to purchase the magazine. Initially a powerful image draws a customer but then he wants to have some idea of the contents. The only way to make this immediately available is to use "key words" ie "featuring" which are so familiar you don't really take them in, they serve as a link between you and some quick, basic information. They are far from irrelevant.

Reading on it became apparent that Mr Crooks is totally ignorant about the thinking behind layouts. Pictures are overlapped and printed at angles not to look "casual and hip" but to help draw the eyes into the page or make it more dynamic.

Starburst is one of the most visually exciting magazines on the market thanks to Rahid Khan's innovative approach. We don't want to see just one big picture totally uninterrupted, or pictures all equally sized etc. Khan has injected a strong dose of fresh ideas into his layouts, something that Mr Crooks obviously can't appreciate. If he had his way *Starburst* would look totally unimaginative and bland, then it would seriously be in danger of not reaching its 100th anniversary.

Rob Green,
Crawley,
Sussex.

Alan McKenzie and Rahid Khan would like to sincerely thank the loyal readers who sprang to the defence of *Starburst*. We were genuinely touched by the sheer volume of supportive letters. It's a great feeling to know that your efforts are appreciated. Thank you all!

no 14 the magazine of cinema & television fantasy 94p

STARBURST

no 14 the magazine of cinema & television fantasy 94p

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including interviews with
 THE DIRECTOR
 THE PRODUCER
 THE STARS
 THE EFFECTS TEAM

plus we talk to
 ARNOLD SOHN (NAGGECOR
 star of LONAN)

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no 10 the magazine of cinema & television fantasy 94p

STARBURST

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GRAND 50th
 ANNIVERSARY
 ISSUE

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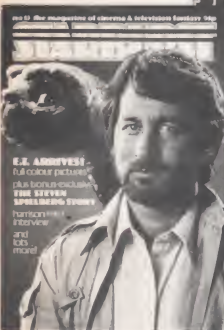
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E.T. REVISITED

This letter is the result of a gestation period which started in July 1982, after the release of some free pamphlets in the Sunday papers in Los Angeles. They announced: "Universal Pictures is proud to present Steven Spielberg's latest film." OK, yet another letter about E.T. Forgive me a brief intro' to my humble self. Wanted to make films since a kid, want to LA. at 17 years old, managed to meet Spielberg on 1941, studied, went to America again, got a film job, now in the BBC gaining some technical knowledge as a trainee asst editor. I've followed Spielberg's career for a long time. His background is not dissimilar to mine, (I believe his parents were richer) and I think that is very important to your liking a particular film by a particular director. CE3K was my ultimate cinema experience, and I became very bitter and violent if anyone knocked it. What I didn't understand then is that NO-ONE'S OPINION MATTERS BUT YOUR OWN. I was so anxious to share my encounters experience that frustration turned to anger, and I longed for people to receive the same indescribable joy that I felt in that movie theatre. After 4 solid cinema-going years (press screenings, about 2.7 a week) I found that I experienced one or two recommendable "rush" films, one or two mind blowing films and the rest were mere pap.

For me, today, the E.T. campaign has reached an annoying and very interesting climax. Doing a thesis on Spielberg and his films has enabled me to attempt to take an objective view of his work. I am not going to write a review of E.T. but try to explain something from my peace of mind.

The tasteful readers of most magazines share something in common. From the gore mongers to the star gazers, we all love to be led by the hand to worlds

and people not so different from ourselves, experiencing wonders that hit-cept after served up by some of the most talented toy makers in existence. Now hang on. With very obvious exceptions (such as Blade Runner) there are an awful amount of "simple" movies on the loose. They rely on emotional participation, wishful identification, (I'd love to be dragged behind a truck and beat the bad guys, it's fun!) and good old raw value for money. I, too, am sick to death of the mindless critics who denounce Spielberg's films for exactly the reasons that make them successful, ie commercially. He has now been accepted as the most popular artist working in any medium to date. And that's fine too.

Surely you've all felt the same way one time or another. You come out of E.T. emotionally drained, and think about it for weeks, re-seeing it, trying to explain its effect. Then you see Blade Runner. Suddenly, the term "favourite film" flies out of the window, and you are left with a sense that your "favourite film" is entirely due to a number of very obvious factors;

- What kind of mood you were in at the time.
- What age you are, or were. (Some movies are timeless).
- What the circumstances of your life are all about.

For example: I spent £40 on a trip to Edinburgh to see the British premiere of E.T. I made a commitment. (TV does not require commitment). I was euphoric at the time, my first film festival, and Edinburgh is such a lovely city. I'd secured the BBC job, and I was (and am) 21. And we all know the ages of folks most found in the movies these days is 16 to 25. I saw the film with 2,999 other people who had made the same commitment, who so wanted to be there. Can you imagine that thrill? There were

standing ovations, thousands cheering. It was a very special, moving, and exhilarating experience. Incidentally, there was a notice pinned to the film-house board;

"E.T., Phone home" which believe me was very funny. But now we've reached saturation point. Just to finish up on the point of film experience. I saw CE3K for the first time at a late preview and due to the secrecy of the movie there weren't a lot there. Now, usually, audience participation is crucial to my enjoyment. Don't you laugh more when there are others around you enjoying it as much? Well, CE3K, minus audience participation made it a little more personal. It was as if Spielberg had put a sub-title on the film; "Alan, this is all for you," and it was a privately glorious experience. It was an amalgamation of Pinocchio & 2001 which were my influences as a child. CE3K made me feel again, gave me an experience I never knew I had in me. I expected (always a bad thing, an expectation) E.T. to be a modern fairy story, but what made it so surprising was the humour. I was moved in E.T., on a very childlike level (not childish...). It's beautiful to have that capacity of enjoyment, and we all need stimulants in life once in a while. But it's only a movie!

Saturation point; Nationwide today. Spielberg; The Con-man. Oh, give me a break! Movies are a business. You can't come someone into having something they want. The trick is to make them believe they want it. And the publicity machine has made the film into an event (hence the delay from US to GB) but the fact is the film is nothing less because of it. Just recognise the creeps making money illegally, but if you're prepared to pay for his merchandise, then go for it! My shelves are full of old magazines and memorabilia that I have no interest in. It's just that all these items served to

express an enthusiasm for a film that I loved A long time ago. We change, and so do our tastes. There are enough fads long gone now to prove points. In a few months, possibly weeks, it will become fashionable to hate E.T. Talk to these people, ask them to point out why they didn't enjoy it. Have discussions, don't be so sensitive. I loved the Star Trek shows, movie 1 & 2, but I also love the way Brosnan writes, and having met this fugitive, I can say that he's a really hoopy frood. I actually got into a discussion (argument actually...) with someone weeks ago who said, very definitely; The Exorcist is harmful scurrious pap and the people responsible should be shot. That's a fair enough comment. I asked in retaliation; "Which scenes offended you?" He replied "Oh, I haven't seen it but..." That's when you can laugh. I did, and almost received a black eye because of it. See it then discuss.

I loved E.T. but will not be buying the pillowcases. Oh, and do people complain about Snow White pencil cases nowadays? I think an awful lot of people criticise because it's current, it's fashionable, and it also shows everyone around them that you really do need a good argument to stand up with. Disney have been raking in the cash from their characters for years. Ah, but Disney is now accepted. It may take a while for the cynics to realise that Spielberg is our Disney, and does care about the money he's making? I don't think so. Pleasant off shoot, nothing more. His pleasure comes from ours. It's a shame that Steven himself can not see E.T. for a first time.

Alan Miller,
 S. Glamorgan,
 Wales.



CAPTAIN'S LOG: We have sighted a new faw in our cinematic galaxy. Sulu and Uhura identify it as *681 A.D.: Revenge of Khan*. Too close by name to our current space shot. We are closing

in to force an ident-switch immediately."

"Not logical, Admiral! Can you not see it stetes, quite clearly: *681 A.D.* This six-hour piece of safety-stock emulsion

is, in fact, a Bulgarian epic, originally known as *Khan Asparouch*—a moving biography of the Father of the Bulgarian Nation. No one will confuse treks, Admiral. Besides, logic insists no one

will sit for a six-hour epic, even if it can afford 50,000 more extras than we had in four television light years."

"But...I're cutting speed to 110 minutes. Spock, and moving into an

THINGS TO COME

tony crawley

BOB'S YOUR UNCLE—

AGAIN

Or Things To Come Beck... Well, they do keep returning, don't they? The heroes of yore, super or mortal. We've had Superman, Flash Gordon, Buck Rogers, Tarzan, Hercules, Sean Connery, Batman is still promised by one-time Bondsmith Tom Mankiewicz and Ray Harryhausen is polishing his Jason figurines... Now Michael Sloan has penned and produced a tele-comeback for Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin. Plus, I presuppose, all those THURSH baddies.

Shooting started the other month in Las Vegas, the home of many a come-back. And the coper has the quite marethon title of (breathe in, do) *The Return of The Man From UNCLE—The 15 Years Later Affair*.

Robert Vaughn (direct from major villainy on the *Superman III* set) and David McCallum (up to nothing of import since *Sapphire* and *Steal Bent at the Joints*) are in shoulder-harness again as the suave, cut-lipped Solo and the Russian (still? What will Reagan say?), ever-willing Illye. Sadly, they have a new boss, of course. Leo G. Carroll, the polished veteran of the 30s' films who played UNCLE's M-figure, Alexander Waverly, in the 1964-68 MGM telemagazines, died in 1972. No room in the big return for *The Girl From Uncle*, April Dancer, as Stephanie Powers is too tied up being *Hart to Hart* with Robert Wagner.

The UNCLE agents were the first of the 700 rip-offs, as early as Bond being just three movies old, with James Coburn's Darek Flint and Dino Martin's groping Mett Helm two years away. Bond's creator, Ian Fleming, had a little to do with the series. Not a lot. Just a finger... or fingernail in the pie. Clearly, all the signs are there with the fresh acronyms from the man who put SMERSH and SPECTRE into the language. (Anyone who knows what the UNCLE initials stood for wins this month's super star prize of going direct to the end of the column to check if they're right—without having to read all my guff inbetween!)

Fleming had discussed the potential of a secret agent show with his Los Angeles friend, producer Norman Felton. But it was writer Sam Rolfe who hacked out the heroes on paper. Even then, Fleming's influence was hardly absent. Felton was selling his pilot show simply, Solo, until realising Fleming held the carte Mr Solo in his *Goldfinger* book.

"I was to use my own personality in playing him," recalls Robert Vaughn, 50. "Felton wanted Solo to have the light touch that Bond had. When I was making *The Lieutenant* series (1963) for him, Felton used to notice me relax between takes and maybe say something funny. Dr cynical. He wanted this relaxed, humorous approach to life in

Solo. Which is why he offered me the part... which made me an international star end, by the time the series ended, had multiplied my annual earnings fifty times. But it also destroyed my highly cherished privacy and I discovered what it's like to be the object of riots and to have to hide from strangers inside your own front door."

David McCallum, 49, has much the same memories, of course. He's as Scottish as Sean Connery. Which is why—in Hollywood thinking—he was perfect as the Russian sidkick to Solo, soon after moving to Hollywood from a meagre British career to play Judas in *The Greatest Story Ever Told* epic in 1965. He called his Kuryakin "a couth Beath" and started the series very much as second fiddle to Napoleon's solo. Before the second series, fans were divided equally between the two. The relative unknowns (Vaughn being slightly better known as one of *The Magnificent Seven*, a politico aspirant and friend of the Kennedys) became major stars in 30 UNCLE-made countries, winning 50,000-plus fan-letters a week.



McCallum recalls the series as beginning "as a merchandising concept to all UNCLE theme-song records and UNCLE spy-kits." Vaughn remembers the first day of shooting in more precise terms. It was his 31st birthday and while driving to the location of a tele about UNCLE men prevented the assassination of a Latin American president. Vaughn heard those awesome words on his car radio: "Three shots have been fired at the Presidential motorcade in Dallas." It was November 22, 1963. The day Jack Kennedy was killed.

TARZAN No 17

Robert Towne's ten year slog of *Greystoke* finally got underway in the Cameroon, West Africa, in November. Hugh Hudson, ex-*Chariots of Fire*, is directing a lot of Rick Baker animatronic apes down there, which is, presumably, why the new Tarzan hasn't actually been named as we go to Press. Not has there been a full explanation as to why

the script of *Chinatown/Shampoo* men Bob Towne is somehow credited not to P.H. Vezek and Michael Austin. Seems poor Bob lost more than his plans to direct the movie during all the legal furore over his halting debut, *Personal Best*. Oh yeah, by the way, the film has a different, well longer title now. Start practising it, so when asked what's you've seen lately next year, you can reply, quick as a shot: *Greystoke: The Creation of Tarzan And His Epic Adventure*. I preferred them when they had less pretentious titles like *Tarzan and the Leopard Woman*. Boy, Saturday morning pitchers were a long time ago.

CARLO HOMMAGE

Forgot the Universal tour, forget Disneyland, Disneyworld or even EPCOT.

If you're off to California soon, like today, take the cab from LAX straight to the State Museum of Science and Industry. They're paying tribute to magister Carlo Rambaldi there in display called *The Man Who Made The Film Creatures*. (Shouldn't that be *maker*; he hasn't quit yet.) The exhibition includes various Carlo models from a claimed 400-plus film and TV assignments in Italy and Hollywood. Carlo donated his *King Kong* masks, Mike Caine's radio-controlled *Hand*, Puck from *Close Encounters*, a *Pinnocchio* model with extending proboscis, some of his electronic brets from *Nightwing*, innumerable monsters (including his *Possession* creature from the French film) end, last but not least, although it is a miniature version, *E.T. himself*.

Someone should bring the show to the Victoria and Albert... over to you, Alan!

Carlo Rambaldi's next assignment, by the way, is *Pin*. More on that next month when I've found out if the film's boss lady, Tine Sinistra, is who I think she is...

THAT CRASH...

Something very odd has happened to the major investigation into the *Twilight Zone* helicopter crash deaths. It's been halted. In mid-inquiry. Pow, just like that! Other concerned parties, from the local D.A. to California's Labour Commission, are incensed at the news. They were depending on the most complete report possible (more technical than their's could be) from top safety investigator, Don Lorente.

From the first news of the crash, the entire affair has had a rather nasty smell attached to it. This latest news of the National (ie, Washington, not California) Transportation Safety Board's inquiries being stopped, has, I'm afraid, the odour of big studio interference. I hope not. But I don't need to be perenoid to know that Hollywood has financed and pulled off more cover-ups in its history than

even Nixon tried. Like you, no doubt, I'd prefer to think that Film City, already in trouble for working kids in the wee small hours, would be even more keen to sask the cause—y'alls, the blame, if you like—for the triple deaths, own up, provide some form of justice for the families and make all moves necessary to pravant repetition of such accidents.

And it is Dan Lorente's job, after all, to determine the cause, or probable cause, of the crash. He was planning to do this, as definitely as possible, by reconstructing the five film-set explosions; the final two of which appeared to have detonated as one, striking the chopper's tail-rotor end resulting in the death-crash. So why couldn't he get on with his plan? Too expensive, say some. He has evidence ancora, says his Washington bureau chief. Dan Lorente, however, is saying nothing. For now.

SPIELBERG RIDDLE

Questions, though, are finely being asked about Steven Spielberg's whereabouts at the hour of the accident. Warner Brothers and Spielberg's lawyer insist that Spielberg was not at the John Landis set at the time; nor at any time. However, the man scurrying around, locating cars to take the dead kiddies' parents and any injured away from the carnage, has given 103 pages of sworn testimony... to the opposite. Carl Pittman says he also had to come up with a car for Spielberg. Yes, he has there, swears Pittman. In fact, Pittman goes so mad with Spielberg—"he was too cold about it"—that he had to walk away from him. "I didn't want him to have the car. I wanted to keep it... at this point, no one knew how many people were injured."

Who's right, then? Unless you know him well, Spielberg is quite faceless among a set of casually-dressed, bearded film-making clones. Or can it be that the world's top director did, as they're calling it now, a Taddy Kennedy that awful night? Again, I hope not. And I'll be first to print the correct facts of the matter—when I have them for the record.

ZONE III

With the John Landis and Joe Dante segments on the editing table (well, John's must be in the can by now), George Miller has also knocked off his *Twilight Zone* episode. And what kind of star did George pick for his first (by no means his last) Hollywood work? You'd be surprised. Top role went to John Lithgow, alias the transsexual Roberta Meldon (one-time football player) in *The World According to Garp*. Supporting players include such exotica as Abbe Lane, singer-dancer and ex-wife of Xavier Cugat who hasn't made a movie in zonks and same goes for 80-year-old

"Dammit, Spock, must you lousa up

"Spock . . ."
"Admiral!"
"How do you *know* all this?"

monitoring of

Sadly, I hear the same kind of re-cutting row has been going on at Paramount where the big cheases are insisting on their cut of John Sayle's first feature for a major studio. The film is *Baby, It's You*. The star is Rosanna Arquette (excuse me while I swoon) And John, the *Alligator*, *Piranha* (etc) writar, is too good a talent to mess around like this.

THINGS TO COME

TOBE HOOPER steering well clear of Spielberg storyboard control with *The Lights*, an \$1 adventure for producer Ray Wagner. After that, well you ready for Hooper's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* Tobe done in 3-D?

JOE DANTE unworried by Spielberg influences. With his *Zone* tale done, his next job has Steve as exec producer. Title of film—and of the problem—is *Gremlos*.

ISSAC ASIMOV is having his *Pirates of the Asteroids* prepared as a Fox movie by Paul Meslinsky. Paul had a digit or two in *Damnation Alley*, such a Fox clunker the studio almost refused to back it again in *Star Wars*.

PETER YATES switches time, budgets and extras for his *Krull* successor. It's the two-hander play, *The Dresser*. Tom Courteney repeats his stage role as dresser to a hammy old theatrical knight (based on Sir Donald Wolfit). Yates wants Albie Finn as the hard day's knight. Surely, Peter D'Toole is hammer?

SEAN CUNNINGHAM invested some of his *Friday* The 13m millions into a genre switchover, *Spring Break*. Sean calls it "an original comedy set against the background of sun, sand, surf, suds and sex." Oh very original. Camp Crystal Lake without the blood and to be followed, I guess, by *Summer/Autumn* /Winter Break?

DINO DE DUM-DUM moving into the food business in New York. But not alas, quitting movies. Hate to tell you but August 26 is opening date for *Amityville* 3-D.

JOHN SAXON, from *Battle Beyond The Stars* and Richard Hatch, ex-*Battlestar Galactica*, teamed up with Kay Lenz for *Prisoners of the Lost Universe*. They're making it there, too. Johannesburg.

SPACE VAMPIRES (CONT'D)

If at first you don't luck out—don't yell uncle. Such is the Cannon thinking about Colin Wilson's *Space Vampires* novel. And, when you come to think about it, almost every other project on the Cannon map. Messrs Golen and Globus just never give in. They've been regularly announcing the Wilson vehicle oh, since 1979, at least. That's back in *Lemon Popsicle* II days!

Klaus Kinski was due to have one of the five starring roles when "filming begins January 15, 1980," I recall from one Cannon flurry of announcements. However, Kinski had flown the coop when the film was next declared "in pre-production, ready for release Winter '81."

The absence of a scriptwriting credit on either of these two plans probably had something—just a little something—to do with the film never being made as announced. But then, Cannon didn't re-make *Valentino's The Sheik*, either—although they soon used the same ad art when the re-tread turned into *Sahara* for Brooke Shields.

By the time, Cannon had begun *Popsicle III* and began destroying Zanuck-Brown plans with *Enter The*

Ninja (going through a complete change of cast and director between announcement and shooting). Sylvia Kristel was announced for *Private Lessons*, a pick-up that got away, so she became Lady Chatterley for Cannon instead and Menahem Golen said he'd direct Bronson in *Death Sentence*. He didn't. That became Mike Winner's *Death Wish II*. All of which happenings (did I forget *Popsicle IV*?) put Cannon into the big numbers and so a brand new *Space Vampires* script was announced—or at least credited to some writers. Gerry Cowan and Daf Pooley supplied the script due to be directed by the man who made *Superman* fly, Zoran Perisic in time for "world premiere, Christmas 1981."

The rest was silence. . . The old, familiar *Vampires* ad art was strangely missing from Cannon's hard-sell advertising at Cannes and Mifed last year as *Sahara* changed directors almost monthly. Sylvia Kristel was not to be Mata Hari and Bo Derek was pected for *Boleto*. Now, all the Cannon fire was about Lou Ferrigno's films with Sybil Denning, a couple of Faye Dunaway movies and the company's pick-up of the second 3-D movie from the *Comin' At Ya* guys, *The Treasure of the Four Crows*.

And so, wouldn't you know it, the 3-D helmer, Ferdinando Baldi, has now agreed to make *Space Vampires* in tri-di. Starring? Tony Anthony, of course. Maybe.

& BRAINSTORM (CONT'D)

New Readers Start Here. . . Natalie Wood was accidentally drowned last year before shooting was complete on her fantasy movie, *Brainstorm*. Director and effects expert Doug Trumbull always maintained she had basically finished her role. His backers, MGM, tended to treat the death as a good excuse to collect from Lloyds of London, shut down the movie and forget all about it—sell it, or have Lloyds sell it. The wrangle went on for months, Trumbull insisting on a chance to simply finish the film—mainly the SFX work needed to be done. Various Hollywood combines seemed interested in picking up the pieces and letting Trumbull complete the pgsaw. After all the angst, MGM have finally decided to keep the movie and finish it. That rules Doug Trumbull out (and lets I.L.M. in!) of supplying effects for any other movie for the next five months or so. . . At least, he's completing *Brainstorm* at last. That's good news. It's only his second film as a director since the miniclassic, *Silent Running*, in 1972.

FINALE

There is still some doubt about whether the final work of murdered *Pottergeist* actress Dominique Dunne will be seen. Dominique, 23, daughter of a film producer and novelist, niece of novelist-scripsters John Gregory Dunne and Joan Dixon, and brother of off-Broadway

actor Griffin Dunne, was allegedly strangled to death by her Ma Maison chef lover on October 30 and died, without regaining consciousness, five days later. She had drama training in both London and Florence, and after nipping through the usual tv series guest shots (*Frame, Chips, Lou Grant, Hill Street Blues*) and tie-flicks like *The Day The Loving Stopped* and *Ghost Riders*, she was just beginning to make a name for herself because of her role as the *Pottergeist* daughter—the one giving the finger to the pool-workers. At the time of her murder, she was working on Warner Brothers four-hour tele-film, *V*, described as a cross between *War of the Worlds* and WWII resistance dramas. The film, which may now be seen minus Dominique's role, was expected to lead to her first tv series role.

HERCULEAN CLAIM

Postscript from the Cannon halls. . . Apart from *Lemon Popsicle V, VI* and most likely *VII*, the company is following their two *Hercules* offerings with one, which could become two, on the *Sinbad Hercules* syndrome. As for the *Herculean* schmemps, Menahem Golen claims, "We're taking Hercules from earth and into the vacuum of the universe. Our concept is bound to rejuvenate fantasy and science fiction in a bigger dimension." Sounds good. But Lou Ferrigno never told me that.

ORSON START

Only real surprise in the comedy version of *Halloween* turns up in the end-credits of *Trick or Treats*. These introduce a new name to the terror genre. Orson Welles, no less, as "magical consultant." The credit for director Gary Graver explains all. Gery's an old mate of Welles, often working as his cinematographer, inbetween his own soft-core and biker quickies. This background also explains David Carradine's small, it padded out, role as step-father (Carrie Snodgrass is the un-Carrie mum) of the comic childer's fat kiddie—who happens to be the director's son, Chris. He pulls nasty practical jokes on his babysitter, the night his folks go out and his real father splits his asylum, seeking revenge on his divorced mistress. Peter Jason is the deranged Poppa (on the lam in nurse's drag!) and one-time soft-core sex star, blonde Jackelyn Giroux, who used to be brunette and known as Jackie or Jacqueline Giroux, and for that matter billed once or twice as Robyn Whiting, has the Jamie Lee screaming role. But any kid who can only set her off by chopping off fingers and committing suicide, instead of trying to do with her what Poppa did to the nurse in order to get her uniform, has no future in movies!

Oh there is one surprise during the fun on-screen. Paul Bartel turns up as, of all things, a whino. It's walk-ons like this that kept Paul going while trying to finish *Eating Raoul* on weekends. He didn't need any Welles' magic consultancy. He has enough of his own.



CREEPSHOW'S OFF

Good to report that the chance Warner Brothers took with *Creepshow* in America paid off. But slowly. The King-Romero opened well, dragging in eight million buckeros in five days. Second week crept more than showed, business dropping by as much as 46%. Why? Because the other George struck back with his *Empire* re-issue, that's why! So, okay, the horror Steve 'n' George may not do as well as the box-office as the fantasy Steve and George, but with it's good London opening, and Europe and the world still to come, it could be, after 16m dollars in 19 days that *Creepshow II* is a possibility. Though, I'd much rather see *The Stand* get rolling, wouldn't you?

Can't understand our critics, though. The British Film Institute's Tom Milne felt *Creepshow* was a feeble echo of Amicus movies. "Far from enhancing the comic-strip ambience, these (devices) are at best coy, at worst unforgivably clumsy." Milne seemed to like Stephen King's own starring sketch, felt Leslie Nielsen was the best of the actors, while the big bugs finish was "merely embarrassing"—Robert Bloch and Freddie Francis did it all so much better in *Torture Garden*. "Hah! Fortunately, Richard Corliss, in *Time*, understood it for what it was—"an elaborate tribute to Tales from the Crypt and other horror comic books of the early '50s." Corliss felt the bugs tale was the only one mixing "giggles and grue" in correct measure.

I still like it, so there! So does Milton Subotsky. He's preparing a *Fright Night* compendium with three tales by Steve King. More on this next month.

BONNIE TENEBRAE

Romero's mate, Deno Argento, has perhaps his biggest hit with *Tenebrae* in Rome. In its first nine days it pulled in

some 1.2 million dollars, which is plenty good business for Rome (it reads better in Italian: 1.645 billion lire). "I've been in this business for a long time," says Goffredo Lombardo, boss of the Titanus distributors, "but have never witnessed spectator enthusiasm verging on collective folly. There's no comparison with audience reaction to Argento's thrillers of the past." The wily Lombardo bought the film from the Argento brothers some months ago. He showed it once at the Mifed trade festival in Milan, last autumn. Result: nearly two million bucks from knocked-out distributors in ten countries. Yes, yes, Britain included. I hope to catch it at the Avoriaz festival.

PARIS SF FEST

Not sure what (or not) to say about the twelfth Paris Science Fiction and Fantasy Festival (*Nothing, if you like! It's covered elsewhere this issue*—Editor). The organising Schlockoff brothers took umbrage at my comments this time last year, for saying their event is not a festival in the normally accepted sense of the hype, more a week of fun 'n' games for French (and visiting) horror fans, who turn up and shout and scream, boo and cheer in the best of *Rocky Horror Show* traditions of bizarre costumes and paint-jobs. My comments still stand. It is a bravura Horror Week, not a fantasy fest and while I can sympathise with *les freres* for so often losing some of their better selected films to the more definite festival approach of the later Avoriaz event in France, I can hardly cheer a Paris, or any other festival, which gives the best acting award to Joe Spinell and his mother Mary in *The Last Horror Film*. Gave it to Joe for sweating and mugging, at least, and his Momma for guts!

Such a ludicrous award only reinforces my comments from last year. No, I didn't visit the affair. I know it was in good hands with Phil Edwards and Alan Jones on hand. I gather the organisers left tickets for me at the box-office. But not any make-up

DOUBLE DOUBLE-SEVEN

The news from the rival Bond films (each production company hates it if you mention them together!) is that Roger Moore is definitely quitting after *Octopussy* and Sean Connery says never again after *Never Say Never Again* (Well, he can't help on re-making *Thunderball*, can he?) The girls on Moore's finale are already known as the octopussies. And the ex-Jackal Edward Fox is Sean's M, with Rowan Atkinson, no less, joining the spree, not as Q, as I thought, but a British Embassy doc. If Pam Stevenson can take on *Superman III* I suppose Rowan can meddle with Bond.

JAMES BOND Mk IV

If Roger does quit—which he has been known, I think, to change his mind before—whom's the next Bond? That'll be up to

the new producer. For I also hear that Cubby Broccoli, 74 in May, steps down after *Octopussy*, leaving the rest of the series to his stepson, now the exec producer and co-scripter, Michael G. Wilson. I hear that it's Cubby telling Mike who should carry on Bonding and that is neither recent testees James Brolin and Oliver Tobias but—but that'd be telling.

TESTING HIS WINGS

Believe it or not, as Ripley used to say land still does on Jack Palance's lamentable tv series), top sf author Ray Bradbury has lately made his first airplane flight! Yeah, the guy who takes us all on so many flights of fancy—and doesn't, in fact, even drive a car—was somehow persuaded to fly back home to Los Angeles after having travelled by train and car to the plush opening ceremonies of Disneyland's big brother, EPCOT. Ray, who is 62, says the stewardesses made an enormous fuss of him. "The petted and smoothed my feathers." But no thanks, he doesn't intend to fly again. If aerial shots are required for his *Ray Bradbury's America* tv-special, you can be sure he won't be in the camera-kite.

E.T.'S MUMMY

For, hopefully, his final *Alien* rip, Roger Corman has backed a none too successful marriage of Ridley Scott's creature and *The Mummy*. Yes, well, *Time Walker* is a convoluted script, I agree. It would have us believe that it was really one of Erich Von Däniken's space visitors which killed old Tutankamen and yet buried in Tut's tomb. Dug up in Egypt, the sarcophagus is sent to California (where else, now that Hammer has shut up shop?) for scientific investigations. X-rays work their legendary magic on the mummified figure and King Tut, who is really an ET called Ankh Venaris, is off and running

He or it doesn't walk, stroll or even shamble, but seems to have spent the weekend at Venice Beach and picked up the locals' roller-skates finesse. I mean, man, this Mummy really moooves. What the gliding green-fungus figure is after is some jewels pinched from his wrappings. He needs 'em back to, presumably, phone home and tell E.T. not to bother in making his summer break down here.

The scientist hero is named Doug McCadden. This makes me think director Tom Kennedy wanted Doug McClure. He makes do with Ben Murphy, instead. You remember Ben? The Newman lookalike who could never make it in tv—*Alias Smith and Jones*, *Griff*, *The Chisholms*, *Gemin Man*, et al. For company on campus, Ben has Nina Axelrod, Austin Stoker from *Assault on Precinct 13*, Harry Belafonte's beautiful daughter, Shari. And Jason Williams, better known and loved as Bill Osco's *Flesh Gordon*. Well, that's the rent paid for another month, now how about trying to act again for a living, people!



AWARD SHOWS

And the envelope, please. As expected *Mad Max II* led the field in winning five of its seven nominations for Australian Film Institute Awards. The trophies went for Max-um success in editing, sound, art direction, costume design, and, naturally, to George Miller as best director. The film only lost out on music and camerawork, as the cinematographic nod, also as expected, went posthumously to Gary Hansen, who died in a chopper crash down under while shooting a commercial, a matter of days after the *Twilight Zone* tragedy in Hollywood.

E.T., however—natch!—took all four nominations in Hollywood Youth in Film awards. Henry Thomas, Robert MacNaughton and Drew Barrymore were best kid actor and supporters. Annie's unmentionable lead snapped up the best kid film actress, instead of Paterger's Heather O'Rourke. Mysteriously, *E.T.*, itself, was proclaimed Best Family Animated or Fantasy movie, with the Best Family Movie going to that well known piece of non-violence, *Rocky III*!

British film critics, who get gasted enough times a year in these pages,—didn't put a vote wrong in their fourth annual poll of the best in '82 movies. The Film Critics Circle—when they're attacked they form a circle, they know their John Ford—chose *Missing* and *Mephisto* as the films (and scripts)

of the year, and gave a special award to David Puttnam, who surely can't move in his office these days for awards. Better still, they agreed on an extra technical award to Lawrence G. Paul, Syd Mead and Doug Turnbull for *Blade Runner's* visual concept. Can't argue with that!

Blade beauty Darryl Hannah, such a knockout she almost has me being unfaithful to Barbere Carrera and Rosanna Arquette has moved into a leading role in the *Reckless* movie.

WHATEVER HAPPENED...

to ex-Avenger, Linda Thorson...? I'll try and tell you while I call Pan-Am. She's appearing on Broadway these days (*Hello, what's the next jet to New York, please?*)... and she's taking her clothes off nightly in the ex-West End hit, *Steaming*. (Really? Fine, book me on it!) Excuse me, I'm up, up and away. What—Uncle Who? Oh the UNCLE answers. All right then.

CRY UNCLE?

Well, did you have to read your way here? Sorry about that. The way ole Norman Felton and Sam Rolfe had it, the UNCLE acronym stood for: United Network Command for Law and Enforcement. Right can I go now. Good. Taxi!! Heathrow and stonpot!!

ANDROID

**Review by
John Brosnan**

The movie industry has changed a lot since the 1950's but at least one thing has remained the same—Roger Corman is still making cheap imitations of other people's more expensive films. The only difference is that his imitations are much better than they used to be...

Android is a rip-off of *Blade Runner*, as well as a host of other sf movies, including *Star Wars*, *Saturn 3*, *Silent Running* and *Alien*, but as rip-offs go it's very good. It has wit, charm and style—it doesn't have much originality, true, but then you can't have everything. It does have a very memorable central character in the person of Max 404, a young male android who, like many a male adolescent, is gawky, shy and obsessed with girls. As played by Don Oppen, Max 404 is a delightful creation and already ranks as my third favourite film android (the androids in *Blade Runner* played by Sean Young and Darryl Hannah are 1 and 2 respectively).

Max 404 "lives" on a space station in the year 2036 which is being used as a secret laboratory by mad scientist Dr Daniel (Klaus Kinski who, for the first time that I can recall, actually appears to be *enjoying* himself in a movie) to create a new type of android that will supersede Max.

Max's existence is pretty boring and routine and he amuses himself either by playing space invaders or watching old movies from the 20th Century. Then one day he picks up a distress call from a spaceship and gives permission for it to dock, not realizing that the crew are three escaped convicts who have taken over the ship and murdered their captors.

One of the three, to Max's delight, is a girl—the first he's seen in the flesh, so to speak—and Dr Daniel is equally delighted, though for less innocent reasons. It turns out that with his new android he is trying to create the perfect woman, as a partner for himself, and in an amusing scene he tries to persuade the female convict (Brie Howard) to let herself be wired up during a "sexual experience" in order to imprint the android with female sexuality; the girl, understandably, thinks he is just trying to seduce her and refuses. "I've heard a lot of weird stories from men trying to get into my pants but that beats them all," she tells him...

Meanwhile her two male companions have discovered what Daniel is up to on the station and make plans to steal his secrets and sell them when they get back to Earth. They use the girl to enlist Max's help and she promises him that he can go with them to the Earth he's never seen. But, unfortunately, for the convicts, Dr Daniel proves more dangerous than they'd anticipated... without spoiling the story for you I think I can safely say that it all ends badly for everyone except Max who manages to escape to Earth with the beautiful android. Cassandra (Kendra Kirchner, who comes 4th in my favourite android poll), though one hopes he won't run into any *Blade Runners* down there.

For a low budget movie *Android* looks very good. It also has some impressive model effects which, though sparingly used, could have come straight out of ILM. But the best thing about *Android* is its intelligent, witty script by James Reigle and Don "Max" Oppen.

A word of praise to the director too. He's Aaron Lipstadt who worked as Roger Corman's personal assistant for two years but was originally a "film theorist" at an American university—which just goes to show there's hope for everyone. *Android* marks his directing debut and on the strength of it I'm sure we'll be hearing more of him in future. And Don Oppen ●



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ATTACK OF THE 50 FT. WOMAN



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YOU'LL TREMBLE
WITH SUSPENSE!



THE MAN WHO TURNED TO STONE

VICTOR JORY · ANN DORAN · CHARLOTTE AUSTIN

Poster 1: The U.S. insert for the classic 1958 schlock masterpiece, *Attack of the Fifty Foot Woman*. Poster 2: The U.S. 22X28 poster for *The Man Who Turned to Stone* (Rocky?). Poster 3: A classic! The U.S. half sheet for *The Wasp Woman*, one of the best posters of the fifties. Poster 4: The U.S. insert for *This Island Earth*. (Little known fact, Jack Arnold directed the Metaluna sequences for this movie.) Poster 5: Speaking of Jack Arnold, here's the U.S. lobby card for the famous *It Came from Outer Space* (1953). Poster 6: The title lobby card for Roger Corman's *Little Shoppe of Horrors*, which is currently enjoying a new lease of life as a Broadway musical. A report follows in a future issue of this magazine.



RETURN OF THE SON OF FAB 50\$ POSTER GALLERY



on Paul Schrader
CAT PEOPLE



Interview by Tony Crawley

I planned the movie to adhere to the logic of dreams. Trouble is, I had to show it to people while they were awake."

Paul Schrader, bloody but unbowed, is discussing *Cat People* probably the messiest of re-makes, re-revisions, re-versions, or inversions or indeed of any of our genre output last hectic year.

He came to the Deauville festival looking a completely new Schrader. I'd seen all the photos, but this was far from the guy I last encountered at Cannes about three years ago, that was just before *American Gigolo*, before Travolta quit and Richard Gere took over — "the best thing that ever happened to the film," said the director.

Well, Giorgio Armani sure did a lot more than merely dress up Richard Gere. The Milan clothes designer obviously took the bulky Schrader in hand and completely refitted his life style. From the exterior, at least. His hair is coiffured rather than cut. His moustache is gone. He's less plump, has trendier specs, fashionable duds. In film critic terms, he's looking more like Rex Reed than say, Ian Christie. He's middle-age chic now. Alas, so is his film.

And on the muddlesome basis of *Cat People*, I'm still not sure if he can direct a movie. Or as the Paris critic David Overy put it, "tell a story with film". He can write 'em for Martin Scorsese to improve upon. A script, after all, is really only a movie's blueprint or launching pad. A lot can happen once the director presses the button at the countdown. That's when Scorsese is in charge. That's when Schrader seems at a loss to control the flight of his continuing Calvinist tracts.

He's putting his pain, his problems — belief vs disbelief — on screen. I admire the man for that. Just the same, after *Blue Collar*, *The Hardcore Life*, *American Gigolo* and now *Cat People*, I feel I've had just about enough of the Schrader angst and troubled conscience... about sex, in particular.

If the Armanised Schrader had come back to France expecting his praises sung loud and clear by European critics, he was in for a surprise. They liked the film well enough — there is such a hot 'n' heavy love affair going on between Euro-critics and Nastassia Kinski (one of their own, y' see) that not even Paul Schrader at his most ambiguous can screw it up.

But the group of critics I met with didn't seem to appreciate why this one-time critic said his Hollywood work was always influenced by Euro-movies. They just couldn't detect such touches — anywhere.

"Well, they're there all right," he said adamantly and a mite testily. (If Europeans didn't seem them, who else could?) "The whole ending of *American Gigolo* is stolen, intact, from Bresson's *Pickpocket* (1959)." Well, so is some of Jerzy Skolimowski's *Moonlighting*, but there it's noticeable. Maybe it takes a European to use Euro-influences best.

"There's a lot of little hints in *Cat People* too," Schrader went on. He paused as if someone would agree with him and mention one or two. No one did. "Little Cocteau touches..." he prompted. Still no takers. "I'd rather not go into them if you can't see them. But don't think I don't use my influences. They're there. You just didn't notice."

So there. One ex-critic ticking off foreign colleagues. And he was to do it again...

I wasn't alone in wondering why the great socio-religioso scripter had bothered to re-make a mini or B classic film, anyway. Particularly as he hadn't written it, himself, like all his other films, didn't care that much

for the original or indeed for the special-effects side of it, either.

It was offered to me by Universal," he said. As if that was reason enough. Actually, he asked his agent to see what else was around and then showed a lot of interest in Universal's re-make plans.

But wait, he's slipping some more. "I was trying to write a script, *Born in the U.S.A.* It's semi-autobiographical. It so appealed to me. To do a film I didn't write, a big Hollywood film, a special effects film, a film that was about a woman, and a film that was not very realistic — it seemed to be very liberating to try and do something I'd never done before."

And was it?

Oh yes.

How much re-writing of Alan Ormsby's script did you do?

Well, of course, I had a hand in the script. That falls under the credit of 'A film by...' When you have that credit, you can assume that the director has had a hand in the cinematography, casting, editing and the writing, without necessarily having a credit for the writing. I see that as being a film-maker, rather than just being a director.

You mentioned editing — yet the film seems interminably long. At the same time it also jumps oddly in places. There appears to have been almost savage cuts in the narrative at times.

Yes, I made cuts. The film may seem long but it is under two hours. If it seems longer, that is a relevant judgement. Certainly, it's within the conventional time of screen length. The main cuts were in places where I chose not to write or direct scenes... because I knew I would cut them anyway. So I just did as they say in movies, cut and kiss... Er, that is, kiss and cut.

The whole sequence of the cops finding Malcolm McDowell's lair is surprising fast. Too fast. Too sudden.

(Deep sigh). I learned a long while back that an audience would much rather be confused than bored.

Maybe so... But you give such an inordinate amount of time to a daffy prologue and then cut faster, later, where, surely, it mattered. Look, people do not become cats. I mean, that whole idea is ludicrous to me. The prologue is to give people a good time. It's a lot of hokey in a way. I'm willing to accept that Alan Ormsby's screenplay is probably not as correct as it could be — in my judgment. On the other hand, it is true that the film, as I say, is not logical. The more you try to explain that metamorphosis, the deeper shit you get into.

Sometimes the logic of dreams does not appeal to people when they're awake. That's the basic kinda fun in making this kinda film. And exactly why it doesn't work — compared to the original. How do you view Jacques Tourneur's original *Cat People* (1942)? I liked the original. I didn't think it was as original as all that. Let's just say I liked Tourneur's version... I had no feeling that there would be conflict between what he had done and what I wanted to do. Even though his film was very good, I didn't feel he was one of the grand poets in film history. To try and compare them, only serves to demonstrate the critic's knowledge of the cinema.

Touche! You used *Blondie* on the American Gigolo soundtrack, now you used *David Bowie* — and *Dolby sound*. Were they your suggestions? And while raising music, what's happened to your Hank Williams project?

Music and film don't run parallel anymore. They've become one... Yes, I've written a script about the life of Hank Williams but the rights problem, to his life and his music, are just too difficult insurmountable. And yes, of

course, I pressured the studio to go Dolby. I wanted to use that back-speaker, the one behind your head — to scare the audience. "It might have been better to have used the screen — that's all Val Lewton and Jacques Tourneur needed," I thought as I quit the sit-in, far from satisfied with any of the director's lacklustre comments on his (similar) film.



Then, I was drawn back when a strident American female voice spun out of the crowd and posed, perhaps, the most crucial question for Paul Schrader. What responsibility, if any, did he feel he had, following the effect of his *Taxi Driver* (1976) script upon a certain John Hinckley, Jr., Reagan's would-be assassin?

After some stammering, for once he answered concisely and honestly. "As cruel as it is to say it, there is a certain risk you run doing everything, and much as you like to prevent this kind of social issue, it's part of the overall price paid for free artistic expression."

"At the same time as the Reagan assassination attempt, Mark Chapman shot John Lennon. And Chapman was obsessed with the book, *Catcher in the Rye*. Both of these cases received a lot of notoriety in America, primarily because they were white boys who had identified with famous works of art and tried to kill famous people. The same crime, I think, occurs in every country — it just doesn't get as much attention."

"That's the risk we pay with an open society. I don't think there are acceptable alternatives in a free society. Censorship for example, is a very dangerous game and it's not going to do the job."

"A film or a book does not create a psychopath — the psychopath will just find something else to connect after such censorship of books and films. So you will still have the psychopath, but you will not have art."

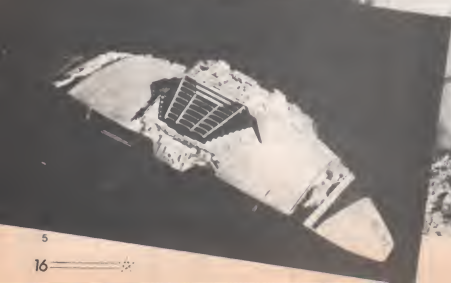
He paused, then as if living up to British critic Neil Sinyard's description of him as "a junk-food Dostoevsky," he underlined the statement. "You will still have Raskolnikov, but you won't have *Crime and Punishment*."

STARBURST PHOTO FEATURE

SPACESHIPS



3



1. A classic, *The Jupiter* probe ship from Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey.

2. Douglas Trumbull returned to spaceships for his directorial debut, *Silent Running*. 3. The X-Wing fighters contributed greatly to the excitement in the last 20 minutes of *Star Wars*. 4. Then Disney tried to jump on the *Star Wars* spacewagon with their *Black Hole*, but the makers completely misunderstood what made *Star Wars* the hit it was. 5. Another *Star Wars* rip-off was the tv series *Battlestar Galactica*. Glen Lerson's series was lively and the spaceships were contributed by *Star Wars*' John Dykstre. 6. A spaceship of another colour was seen in the 1953

11

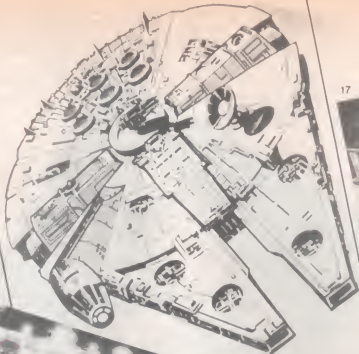
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classic, *It Came From Outer Space*. 7. George Pal's ship in *When Worlds Collide* was built to take selected folk from Earth so that they escape the destruction when a rogue planet smashes into Earth. There was, understandably, some disagreement over who should stay and who should go. 8. A detail from one of the *Silent Running* ships. 9. Another view of the *Cygnus* from Disney's *The Black Hole*. 10. Here the ship from *When Worlds Collide* touches down on a new planet. 11. A spaceship from the Canadian turkey *The Shape of Things to Come* (1978). But the less said about that, the better.

12



17



13



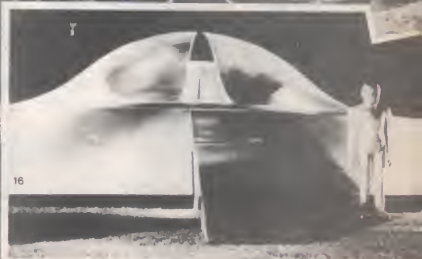
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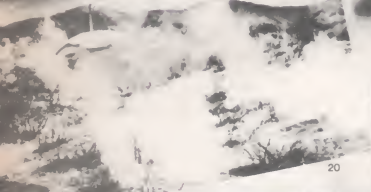
12. One of Joe Johnston's design sketches for the famous Millennium Falcon, Han Solo's smuggling ship, which, according to Solo, made the Kessel run in "less than 7 parsecs"! For the unscientific among us, parsecs are an astronomical measurement of distance, not time... apologies if we're preaching to the converted. Later scriptwriter George Lucas tried to pretend that the mistake was deliberate. Nice try, George! 13. Unlucky for some but not for director Steven Spielberg and Columbia Pictures. Columbia were anxious about the amount of money they had sunk into Steve's UFOs. They needn't have been. *Close Encounters* was a colossal hit and turned the tide for Columbia as a production company. Thank you, Steven! 14. 20th Century-Fox (under the guiding hand of Alan Ladd Jr) financed Walter Hill's production of a Dan O'Bannon script, with Ridley Scott in the director's chair. The result, *Alien*, was a monster of a hit. The ship, pictured here, was the *Nostromo*, designed by underground artist, Ron Cobb.



19



21



20



22

15. The Mother Ship from *Close Encounters* rises majestically above Devil's Tower, Wyoming. 16. The robot Gort (Locke Martin) guards the spaceship in Robert Wise's sf fable, *The Day the Earth Stood Still*. Kleatu (Michael Rennie) is busy elsewhere. 17. The Japanese join the space-race. This is space cruiser Yamato, an animated effort in the post-Star Wars flood. 18. The saucer leaves Earth, bound for Metaluna in *This Island Earth*. 19. One of the ropey rockets on show in *Starcrash*, Caroline Munro's Italian sf opera. Caroline was fine . . . shame about the film. 20. The Martians give poor old Earth a hard time in the George Pal classic *The War of the Worlds*. You could see the wires, but it was still a great movie. 21. Blink and you miss it! Charlton Heston's ship sank into oblivion soon after arriving on *The Planet of the Apes*. 22. What better way to round off this look at movie spacecraft than a still from the hangar scene from just before the climax of *Star Wars*.

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AMOUNT ENCLOSED:

STARBURST FANTASY AWARDS™



It's that time again! Just when you thought that we at *Starburst* had forgotten all about the Fantasy Awards for 1982, here they are. The procedure is the same as always. Merely fill in your favourite movies, directors and so on. The only proviso is that for a film to be eligible, it must have been released between 1st January 1982 and 31st December 1982. For individuals to be eligible (directors, actors, et al) they must have had a film released in Britain between those two dates.

A word of caution to our readers. In previous years, it was apparent that a few readers were merely selecting their favourite movie of the year and automatically filling the names of the director, the star and so on. This is to be avoided, if possible. Remember, while *E.T.* may be your favourite movie, Harrison Ford did do a pretty good acting job in *Blade Runner*. Give everyone a fair chance!

Though tv fantasy has been thin on the ground in 1982, we have retained the categories from previous years. Please don't ignore these categories. Your votes are precious.

Finally, for your votes to count, you must fill in your name and address and include this with your ballot. If you don't want to spoil your copy of *Starburst* magazine, a copy of the voting form will be fine. Thank you for your time.

All ballots must be post marked no later than: 15th March 1983.

tv awards

- Best TV Show
- Best Actor
- Best Actress
- Best Director
- Best Script
- Best Special Effects

film awards

- Best Film
- Best Actor
- Best Actress
- Best Director
- Best Script
- Best Special Effects

others

- Best Fantasy Book
- Outstanding Achievement by an individual

The Dark Crystal

"One of the many unique things about *The Dark Crystal* is the way the concept started," says co-producer/co-director Jim Henson creator of the world renowned Muppets television series. "Everything else I've done started with a script. From that script we would design the characters. *The Dark Crystal* started with an idea to create a fantasy world and environment first and let the story evolve later." Henson first had the idea to do a serious fantasy film using advanced Muppet technology when his team did a few segments for television's *Saturday Night Live* which utilised a series of creatures that were scary but humorous. "It wasn't terribly successful," says Henson, "But I personally thought the creatures themselves were very nice as they had a life that was totally different to anything we'd attempted up to that time, dictated mainly by the very nature of the show." A conversation with one of the daughters, who wanted to see him create a fantasy world with a classic Good vs Evil quest, made the project gel a bit more, further fuelled by Henson's ideas concerning terribly gruesome cocktail parties with reptilian

creatures dressed in fine clothes maintaining sophisticated levels of conversation. "Then I saw Brian Froud's work. A couple of people from my New York workshop showed me some of his illustrations and I thought they were gorgeous. I felt they were immediately translatable in filmic terms for my purpose." The basic storyline for *The Dark Crystal* was finally talked down over a period of two days while Henson and another of his daughters were snowbound at a Howard Johnson's motel while waiting for a flight to England. Writer David Odell was brought in to doctor the script and the project was presented to Lord Grade after the first Muppet movie had become a blockbuster success. It remains to be seen whether *The Dark Crystal* will be the money-spinning swan song from the former tycoon at ITC everyone expects. Both Henson and co-producer Gary Kurtz say that Lord Grade's now legendary financial problems after the flop of *Raise the Titanic* did not hurt their production at all. Says Kurtz, "We had a contract with them. They fulfilled it. We were all aware of what was going on and now their major concern is to release it at a time when they will be more likely to see the biggest



return." Hence the postponement of the Spring opening to one a whole year later.

Gary Kurtz joined the production after he had gone to the Henson Organization for help with the Yoda character in *The Empire Strikes Back*. "They had been working on *The Dark Crystal* for some time and they showed me their tests on some of the creatures they had developed and I found it all very interesting," says Kurtz. So much so that he offered them the expertise he had accrued working on large budgeted special effect pictures. And in a film that for everyone involved was just one large special effect from start to finish, Henson asked him to co-produce. Kurtz not only brought his knowledge of special effects to the production but a knowledge of basic film-making. "Both Jim and co-director Frank Oz had a limited background in that area so I helped a lot as a sounding board for their ideas. That was my main job – to assist the directors into getting the film they wanted." The Muppet connotation is one that Kurtz wants to avoid at all costs in connection with *The Dark Crystal*. "Of course we can't ignore the fact that *The Dark Crystal*'s roots are firmly planted in over twenty years of refining

the Muppets – Jim's entire career is based on that – but we don't want the audience making a mistake that it's just like them. The Muppets succeeded because of the goofy character design and clever writing. In *The Dark Crystal* we couldn't rely on the strength of the personalities per se to overcome their physical limitations. We tried to develop a group of characters that could be as realistic as possible in a variety of different ways. It is a synthesis of everything learnt via Yoda and The Muppets but we hope once people start watching the film, they will accept the creatures as real within the fantasy context and forget all about the technique. The film will not work if you are constantly thinking, 'How did they do that?'"

The story of *The Dark Crystal* is pretty much a standard quest saga in the richly landscaped Tolkienian tradition. It is set in a land unplaced in time and space dominated by an evil breed called the Skeksis. Once a tribe of exalted thinkers ruled the land from a castle in which a great Crystal glowed with the power garnered from the world's three suns. The Skeksis took over when the Crystal cracked and darkened heralding their



degenerate reign. As greed, corruption and decay become the predominant factors in the Skeksis rule, the Crystal becomes the decadent key to their power. The film opens when a mighty astronomical occurrence is about to commence which, if allowed to proceed uninterrupted, will see the Skeksis in power for eternity. There is only one thing the Skeksis fear and that is an ancient prophecy which states that one of the Gelfling race will somehow destroy them. In an effort to protect their dynasty, the Skeksis have tried to eradicate the Gelfling race but unknown to them, Jen has been saved from the monstrous Garthim's claws and had been raised by a clan of Mystics. They see Jen as their salvation for discovering the secret of the Dark Crystal and restoring light and balance to their world.

According to Kurtz, it is unfair to categorise *The Dark Crystal* as a medieval fantasy. "That isn't accurate as we have used the criteria of another world without earthly ties to time and space. It's just that, unlike a lot of science-fiction design which is abstractly interesting but not very practical in terms of a believable environment for the characters to exist in,





The Dark Crystal has an alien technology that you do feel has been developed and made consistent. Primitive is a more apt word and one that I would favour."

When Jim Henson arranged a meeting for himself and Brian Froud, whose books *The Land of Froude* and *Faeries* were destined to become best-sellers, Froud found himself totally won over by Henson's obvious enthusiasm for the project. "He outlined the story in very vague terms but engendered so much enthusiasm that I decided I wanted to be involved. I did a few rough sketches of what I thought the Skeksis would look like and then I was asked to go to New York to work with the primary core of people on the project. We would have these wonderful meetings where we would sit around throwing ideas about and I would be doodling and coming up with visuals that Jim would constantly be looking at and making suggestions about. After all the changes we would arrive at something we both felt happy about. That was the easy part, getting the basic look, the problem was translating my intricate thumbnail sketches into characters that could move. All the manipulative and ►



mechanical problems meant constant design changes as we went along, but it was my job to make sure that nothing got too far away from our original feel and conception. I hadn't worked with the Muppet people before so I didn't know the tricks of the trade at first. It was like a conjuring trick because my designs had to incorporate ways of hiding things to give the surface reality the illusion that these creatures actually had the ability to move."

Because of the complex mechanics involved in all the creatures for *The Dark Crystal*, the actual filming was a logistical nightmare. With three or four people operating each character with six or seven creatures required for each shot, the enormous problems involved become apparent. For this reason a lot of the film's high production cost centred on the lengthy rehearsal time needed to make sure everyone knew exactly what they were doing and the sheer difficulty of filming on the studio floor where everybody had to be hidden under the floor and crouched out of camera range. Add to this the isolation closed circuit television sets the puppeteers needed in order to see how their creatures were translating on a

Panavision screen, which makes directors Jim Henson and Frank Oz's decision to move the camera at any excuse a justifiable one. Jim Henson: "As the puppets were so limited, incredibly so, I had to make the film move as they inherently couldn't. It was because of this reason too that the editing was not dictated by where we wanted to cut but the only place we could do so." Despite all these problems Henson has come to accept that no matter how hard *The Dark Crystal* was to make, no one would ever properly appreciate it. "But that's always been true of everything we've ever done and in a way people shouldn't realise because what it all boils down to is telling the story. Somebody once suggested we should publicise this film as the most fantastic puppet movie ever made but we couldn't possibly as the whole idea has such a negative connotation. The art of *The Dark Crystal* lies in puppetry of course but you could never ever say that."

Henson felt he needed a co-director and talked Frank Oz into it quite late in the production's genesis. "I wanted him to help me because I knew I would be doing a certain amount of performing and I really needed



someone outside whose judgement I trusted implicitly. Frank and I have always worked closely together and we have a clean rapport. Then as a couple of characters began developing like the female astronomer, Aughra, and the Skeksis chamberlain, I knew they would be perfect for Frank, so I talked him into that as well."

For Frank Oz directing a motion picture was a lot of fun but he found it frustrating to have the dual role of being at the helm and also being the characters. "When I was in whatever character, I wanted to be outside thinking about a shot, and vice-versa. It is very disconcerting to be thinking about lighting when you should really be channelling your energy into the manipulation of your puppet. Looking back though, that frustration definitely helped the film. We would communicate through a complicated network of ear and mouthpieces so we could relay instructions to whoever, but no matter how daunted I felt by all the complexity, I always got a surge of excitement the moment I got on the studio floor."

Everyone admits that *The Dark Crystal* could have been an ultimately easier film to make if animation or live-action had been included but as Gary Kurtz says, "This is exactly what we wanted to stay away from because the creatures are definitely more real by not using humans in elaborate make-up. We did do some tests in this area but none of us could deny that it took the edge off the fantasy aspect. Doing that would have eliminated certain problems but it just wasn't convincing enough for us and the same applies to stop-motion animation as I'm not convinced that it would have been easier in the long run mainly because of the cost of optical composition. These were decisions not based on economics though but the overall philosophy behind the film. We wanted to use techniques that were familiar to the concept and not have loads of opticals that would have been restricting on set and would have needed storyboards."

At a budgetary cost of over 30 million dollars, plus the interest accruing to postpone the opening date, is *The Dark Crystal* the costliest fantasy film ever made? Gary Kurtz: "That could be a fair assessment if you don't classify *Superman* or *The Empire Strikes Back* as fantasy but it certainly is unique. How it fits into the market place we will just have to see. Anytime you do something out of the ordinary you risk not being accepted. No one wanted to make *Star Wars* because supposedly at that time science-fiction wasn't popular. If you are continually worried about the audience you aren't going to get anywhere."

So is *The Dark Crystal* going to be fantasy's *Heaven's Gate* or a bold new stride forward it defining what we will want to see on our screens in future years? The choice is yours.

PART TWO: MAKING A STAND ON THE STAND

New readers start here:

The world's top two horrorsmiths, film-maker George Romero and best-selling author, scenarist and part-time actor Stephen King are having lunch with *Starburst* on a beach restaurant during the Cannes film festival. Mrs Tabitha King - Tabby - is also munching on hamburgers and salad. This time last issue in a long, candid conversation they discussed their first collaborative movie, *Creepshow*. Now as the 'burgers disappear and the Perrier is quaffed (it's lunchtime and the day is too long to indulge in vino), we backtrack to how and why Romero telephoned King one day and blew their collective minds and look forward - far, far forward, it would seem - to their next teaming for the long-announced, much awaited and apparently overstymied movie of King's novel, *The Stand*. With quite a few pointers along the way of how the independent film-makers have to struggle against the rarely filmed powers-that-be in Film City.

Sit back, pour a Perrier, or something stronger, and I hope you feel you were with us.

Starburst: As your producer, Richard Rubinstein, told us (*Starburst* 44 and 46), it was - shock, horror, surprise - Warner Brothers that brought you two together. It's still difficult to credit such commonsense - even though they also let you get away!

ROMERO: I don't think they were thinking in those terms right away. They were looking for somebody to make *Salem's Lot*. Christ, how many screenplays were written for that?

KING: Five or six.

ROMERO: They got in way over their heads on story costs. Somebody from Warners had seen *Martin* at a festival and in inimitable studio fashion saw the connection - vampires in a small town! What they saw in Richard and I was an ability. So, basically, they said, "Can you take this, here are all six scripts" - and I'm going *Salem's Lot*! - "Go talk to Steve. Make the movie and come back in six months," And I'm going, yeah, yeah, YEAH! You mean I don't have to work here? I don't have to use Studio C? Great! They just wanted somebody to make it - fast. Because they had this incredible investment in story costs.

KING: And they were worried about all these nine vampire movies coming out. They freaked out! They wanted instant-movie. And it was like going to be a



the king/george conversations



negative pick-up deal or whatever. So I called Stephen and Steve said...

KING: I dropped my pants... I mean, I couldn't believe it, man! Really! You remember, Tabby? (He turns to his wife.) I just walked in and said, "Do you know who called me on the phone today? George F***ing Romero... called me on the telephone. You hear me?" And she said, "Who's that?" And I said, "Night of the Living Dead... the movie you walked out of because you were so scared!"

MRS KING: I didn't walk out of it. That's not so. I could have. But I couldn't!

ROMERO: Well, you're kind to say that stuff. Actually, I was doing that on the other end. I said, Stephen King!

KING: I was so excited, man! That was really something!

MRS KING: We saw that film on Halloween night. Most of the students had gone in high because they'd heard it was a good movie to do a few drugs at, you know. Some of them were outside in the gutter.

Puking

ROMERO: (Laugh).

MRS KING: And having to be rushed to the infirmary

KING: People would come to laugh at *Night of the Living Dead*. This was in the old days before it became a "cult".

MRS KING: This is '68 or '70.

KING: And they'd be stunned to silence. About half way through the film, all the joking would stop and they would be stunned to silence. These college kids who were supposed to be smart asses, they'd be sitting there... (he mimes a spaced-out, shocked-out face). I mean, there were girls who were literally being helped out by their boy friends with their faces deadly white.

And the girls didn't look too hot, either!

KING: It wasn't just from sickness. It was from terror. It's a terrifying situation in that film. That house was so relentless. What an awful place. There were so many ways to get in!

ROMERO: (looking delighted): Well... I read a couple of those screenplays on *Salem's Lot*. One of them was ludicrous. The one with the snakes and all of that. I don't know who did that one?

Who did do them?

MRS KING: Who didn't do one!

KING: Stirling Silliphant...





LINES FROM ROMERO'S FOREHEAD

1. FUTUREVISION

Nothing's about to roll. No deals have been set. I'm looking forward to taking a little break. I'm gonna write. I haven't wanted, nor had Richard (Rubinstein) to line up anything to shoot right away. Because between *Knightriders* and *Creepshow*, we had three weeks off...! We work differently from the way a director might work at Universal. I don't shoot the picture and send it off to Artie for sound effects and then send it off to Johnny for scoring. I work on the film!

3-D VISION

Well, I'm trying to do a realistic experiment in 3-D. The people who financed *Creepshow*, United Film Distribution (UFD) have developed a wonderful process - in twin-70mm. They'd like to make a big 3-D movie. Play it in thirty cinemas around the country. 70mm with raft sound. And I could get real excited about that!

I've seen the system. I haven't shot anything in it yet, but it's beautiful! It's brilliant, it's sharp and it's 70mm. Still with the glasses, yeah. I don't think we'll see any techniques of 3-D without glasses for awhile. The economics of it are that you'd play each theatre. You can also play it flat for 70mm, or reduce it to 35mm and I'd love to do something like that.

3. DAWN(S) OF THE DEAD

Well, there are two versions, yeah. For the European version, Dario

Argento had the right to reduce the film to two hours. Our contract with him said we were to deliver a two-hour film and up to two hours, I had full control. The Italian company, not Dario's, decided to enforce their two hours, so Dario, himself, made the cuts... because at the time, we were working on getting distribution for the States. Dario was doing the music and he called me up to explain his cuts. Basically, what he took out was some of the gag lines, the character humour that he thought idiomatic to the States. And I think the distributor cut out the helicopter scene. They thought it too brutal.

After everything else in that film, I thought it was like one of the milder things. Maybe it had to do with it being too possible. I didn't get involved in working out the scale of these scenes. They ought to show these films in front of judges like for figure skating. And they'd hold up cards for Intensity... Duration... Impact!

4. LIVING DEAD III

I have to deliver the screenplay for the third *Zombie* film - that must begin, contractually, by the start of 1985... And there's another thing that I'm just itching to get on paper - just to write it. So I figure this is the perfect opportunity to sit back and see what happens to *Creepshow* and get some writing done.

I still don't have a title for the third *Zombie*. They've been calling it *Day of the Dead*. And I really don't like that. But I haven't got another title.

Well, I like *Brunch*, actually!

ROMERO: Larry Cohen. Paul Monash.

He produced *Carrie*.

KING: Yeah, Monash did the one that was produced finally. But even that was hybrid.

Did you watch it on the tube?

KING: Oh yeah. Now listen: This is an interesting case and George would agree with this. The man who produced *Salem's Lot* for tv is someone that is very like a genius. He may be the last one left in American tv. I would imagine that Blake Edwards was much like him when he was in tv. His name is Richard Kobritz and among other things, he got a director named John Carpenter, that no one had heard of because it was pre-*Halloween*, to do a picture with Lauren Hutton called *Someone is Watching Me!* (1978). One of the best suspense films ever made for American tv, with the exception, maybe of Spielberg's *Duel* (1971).

So when he didn't get George when he succeeded to this property for tv. He got Tobe Hooper. And the movie was mistaken. It's wrong in a lot of ways. But I like it much better than *The Shining*. It's got this sick, feverish energy that is running through it. And there's things in there that are the way I think you would have shot them, George. Like when the woman wakes up, you know, in the morgue... I don't even know if you saw it.

ROMERO: I saw it. I liked it a lot. I thought it was the best translation of your stuff.

KING: Yeah! And she sits up and he slashes her hand. Have you seen it by any chance?

Only the movie release version.

KING: It works pretty well. I like the movie version better. It seems tighter.

No lead-in to commercials, no continual climaxes like that.

ROMERO: I agree with you. The biggest problem I had with it was that the vampire wasn't the lord. The vampire was an attack dog for James Mason.

KING: I know, and it looked like *Nosferatu*. It was just a dreadful steal on the make-up. That was bad. Right - now to the big question. What's the situation report on *The Stand*?

KING: I'm waiting to talk to George about this myself, so you can tell me, too, George.

ROMERO: Yeah. I haven't had Steve's been very diligent. I haven't.

KING: No, no.

ROMERO: He has a draft ready and I have to sit down and re-read it.

KING: Yeah, we have to get together on what we want to throw overboard.

Now which draft is this, second, third?

KING: In fact, I've done a couple of drafts and I've still got a screenplay that's the size of The Bible. And that's cut down. Considerably!

It is, as you say, going to be a big - long movie. You've enough in that book for two movies, no?

KING: Well, that's what George and I have to do - sit down and No 1, agree that we're gonna do one feature film. We had some talk about doing two, like *Superman* I and II. Shoot them together and then release them a little bit apart. But actually shooting them as one complete movie and just splitting them because of the length of the problem. But if we've decided to do one feature, we have to sit and decide how we're gonna abridge exactly... In other words, I don't want to do another draft and throw out characters and situations and have George say to me, "but I really wanted to shoot that!" Or to keep things in and have George say, "Man we can do without this".

ROMERO: It's a tough problem. It really needs to be a long film - and that's expensive. And this is the wrong time to be pitching a long, expensive movie!

So, as per usual, money is the villain: 15 m. dollars, I gather.

KING: No, the major roadblock is screenplay, I think. We're not talking or thinking about budget at this point.

ROMERO: Well, the screenplay isn't a roadblock in that sense at all. We haven't tried to pitch the project yet. We have, on that level, been waiting to see what happens with *Creepshow*... and waiting to see what happens with the business. I mean, my God - what do you do? Do you go for length and go for cable television? Do you just make half of it as an individual ▶

picture? So many problems. And the biggest is the delivery mechanism, that's really tough. Yeah, if somebody could say, "Hey guys, we'll let you make a three hour film, here's the cheque," then we would seriously sit down and try to get that way.

So it's not money holding things up - but a backer. But that's money, isn't it?

KING: Ironically, after two drafts of the screenplay, it doesn't look like the expensive movie that everybody seems to think it would be. The biggest problem that I saw, as I told George, is trying to make Las Vegas look deserted - that's a 24 hour town! You can shoot New York at dawn, at 5am like they did in *The World, The Flesh and The Devil* (1959) and make the entire city look totally deserted.

But Vegas is on the go 24 hours around the clock!

KING: Right. But then, Richard (Rubinstein), George's partner, found out that Francis Ford Coppola has a scale model of Las Vegas, left over from *One From The Heart* and he's going to rent it out from... what is it? ... Zoetrope Studios? so there's a possibility there.

And the rest of the film looks a lot like a biker movie from the '60s. A lotta guys riding around on motorcycles.

Wouldn't Coppola's model be part of his studio sale, though?

ROMERO: Well, that's the problem now...!

You may have to buy the whole damn studio just to get the model!

ROMERO: The full twenty million dollars.

KING: Oh, we can afford that!

ROMERO: We'll have a place to work... when we bale the hay.

So you're planning for what - next year... 1984...?

ROMERO: We're not thinking of specifics like that. I don't know. I would really like to do it. But I want to do it right.

KING: Right!

ROMERO: I don't want to get in a deal where they

say, "Hey guys, it's gotta be two hours... 2.15 tops. You gotta have a cast that justifies these bucks. You gotta do this you gotta do that." You spend most of your time trying to build as many walls as you can against those kind things. Then, you have to decide when you're gonna let one crack through.

The first compromise - is rarely the last...

ROMERO: You spend your first ten years in the business trying to figure out how to cover your ass in a contract. Then, you get a little bit hot and you spend the next ten years finding out all the ways they can get you to relinquish those clauses. Like Irv Sharpio (boss of *Films Around The World*, *Romero's* and *'King's* foreign sales consultant) tells the story of when the deal is finished... not when you shake hands. Not when you sign the contract. Not when you get the cheque. But when you've deposited the cheque and spent the money! Then, the deal is done.

KING: Even then, I.R.S. (American tax department) might come at you and try to get it back.

ROMERO: That's right...

MRS KING: You owe us from 1908.

ROMERO: You know, the companies they come at you... "I know that you signed this contract and I know that you have this clause BUT... Look here... This is all for the general good, isn't it?"

MRS KING: "We can't make it unless you give up your share of the movie..."

ROMERO: And you're being the sonuvabitch, after all!

MRS KING: Another of their lines is, of course,

"There are people waiting for the work..."

KING: But people don't brood over things like that. Like what they did to the book, what they did to the short story or whatever. Man, life's too short to worry about that.

ROMERO: It's too short to brood over it, but it's.

KING: ...not too short to get even, of course!

ROMERO: Right!





KING: I believe in that!

ROMERO: Or certainly to campaign against it. It's madness. It's madness! Like the five or six screenplays written on Salem's Lot.

I'm beginning to wonder if The Stand will ever be made.

KING: The ideal scenario would be that *Creepshow* goes through the roof (and people are actually bidding to do this) and then we've proved ourselves. They'd give us the money to make *The Stand*. And then we could break it in two and do a movie that would be called *The Stand/The Plague*. It would be a little bit like Bakshi's *Lord of the Rings*.

Hrmp!

ROMERO: Yeah, well except the first one of his wasn't successful so the second half was never made. But we'd make the first half for a reasonable budget, release it – it would be a tremendous hit and we could do the second half.

MRS KING: It doesn't cost that much.

KING: That's right.

ROMERO: No, it doesn't cost a lot.

KING: And we wouldn't have to worry about Las Vegas until ...

ROMERO: ... the tunnel scene!

KING: No, you've got friends in Pittsburgh. We do it in the Squirrel Hill Tunnel. Hell, that's closed half the time, George.

ROMERO: That's true.

But there's you next headache. If Creepshow is very successful, won't everyone, your backers included, want a Creepshow II?

KING: Yeah but I don't have a problem with that. Because I'd love to do it, if it happens. I'd love to just go that extra bit.

KING: What's this – *Creepshow II*? Yeah, oh man, I'd love to write it.

Richard Rubinstein has been denying such a sequel.

ROMERO: We have talked to Irv Shapiro about it. But

Richard's right when he says there's nothing in the pipeline on such an idea.

KING: But there's just ... oh, lots of good stories! If you did that, it would take the place of *The Stand* and push that even further into limbo.

ROMERO: It would depend.

The longer you wait, the more expensive The Stand is bound to become, Coppola's models or no models.

ROMERO: That also depends ... Maybe we should wait until it actually happens and get a lot of footage from ABC News.

KING: Right. We'll wait until Las Vegas is deserted! How do you feel, though, Steve, going back to a book you did in 1975 and writing a script on characters, situations created so long ago. Do you feel you're going backwards or forward?

KING: To a degree you feel, Oh Christ, I've gotta pick up this dead fish again. And it smells worse today than yesterday. But at the same time, you just try. You say to yourself, You're a professional. It's the same with George. There must have been times when George didn't particularly want to go back on *The Crate* set on *Creepshow* ... and find another new place to put the camera. But if you're professional, this is what you do. And I really want to do it. There's so many people, everywhere I go, that say to me: What about *The Stand*? You must hear the same, George. Are you gonna do *The Stand*, what about it? so I'd really like to ...

ROMERO: ... to be able to answer that question! So, no matter how it sounds, it's a film that's going to be made ... sometime ... ?

KING: Well, I'd like to put it together for them and for me, too, you know. I like it. I like that book!

ROMERO: I love it!

KING: (Stands up; George, I've gotta go ... (He plays acts Hollywood.) Hey, let's work together sometime.

ROMERO: Sure, let's have lunch.

KING: Yeah, let's take a meeting! ●

Paris Film Festival

The lights dim. The 3000 plus audience, packed to the rafters in the Grand Rex cinema on the Boulevard Poissoniere, roar their approval as the Festival's official theme for this year, "Bloodnight", is played. Master of Ceremonies Alain Schlockoff enters stage right and delivers an opening speech to inaugurate the event that he and his brother Robert started in 1972 and is greeted as usual with a barrage of paper planes and abuse. The insanity that has now become a ritual in Parisian fantasy fans grinds into action once more and begins to gather momentum at an alarming rate for what will turn out to be an exhausting ten day period.

Hard to believe this is my sixth visit in a row and my third stint on the Critic's Jury. To last the course takes a strong constitution and an iron will and as incredibly exciting as it sounds one spends one's time sitting through endless movies, it can prove tedious if the films share similar plots or low budgets. Everything is telescoped in a way that does nothing for one's usual critical patience.

Nevertheless, it is primarily a fun Festival with the herdest crowd in the world to please. This year the socialising is more frenetic than usual and the constant panic-stricken checks that one's reserved seat hadn't been filched by a non-English speaking person who wouldn't understand your broken French, is down to a minimum.

1982 has been a good year for the Schlockoff brothers. Their magazine, *L'Ecran Fantastique*, went monthly and with the proper backing and distribution it deserves is reaching an ever widening readership. Also the tickets for the Festival sold out in record time which meant mob scenes outside the Rex every night and queues for popular films starting at 2.30 p.m. for a 7.30 start. The French have always been more cine-mad conscious than their English counterparts and nowhere is this more evident than in the fantasy genre, something that has been fuelled by the Festival over the years and this year, despite the pushing and shoving of general madness, it generated yet another tremendous boost of confidence.

In the following diary I have only covered at length new films and those which for specific reasons stated, I felt deserved special mention. Most of the retrospective films I have noted just for the record.

12/11/82 FRIDAY

The World Premiere of *Turkey Shoot* was an apt film to start the Festival with as it contained just the right combination of thrills and gore to keep the vociferous audience unusually subdued. It isn't a good or very well made film but it is never boring and scores high in the entertainment stakes. Coming from the same team who made *Harlequin*, Anthony I. Ginnane and David Hemmings, *Turkey Shoot* is an Australian version of *The Most Dangerous Game* that surprisingly looks like an Italian exploitation picture rather than an Aussie one. Steve (*The Stuntman*) Railsbeck and Olivia Hussey find themselves labelled as deviants in a futuristic society and are thrown into one of the many proliferate global correction centres that are run by sadistic controls. Michael Craig heads Camp 47, (his name is ominously Thetcher), and for





the governing aristocracy has organised a human sport. If they can stay alive long enough their prize is freedom – and so begins a battle of wits as the fight for survival begins. Director Brien Trenchard-Smith apparently had his budget cut in half a few days before shooting was due to begin which probably accounts for why the film's set-piece atrocities never look as fully realised, or as horrible, as we are initially led, (or hope??), will be the case. Hard then to see why the British censor has objected to this film, as the over-the-top violence is surely tongue-in-cheek? With the inclusion of a ludicrous freak called Alph who bites off little toes and gets cut in half by a bulldozer, in one of John Stears better special effects, *Turkey Shoot* is preposterous but enormously watchable camp. And any film that has the usually perfectly manicured Olivia Hussey cutting off a guard's hands with a machete and manning a machine gun can't be all bad. Can it? *Turkey Shoot* will be opening in March in the U.K. via Enterprise Pictures in a slightly re-edited version that purportedly makes it a nastier film. In France it will be released under the title of *Island of the Damned* which stupidly give away one of the only surprises the plot really contains.

Plague of the Zombies followed due to the Schlockoff's role of supplying deprived Festival goers with the Hammer films they always crave but very rarely see these days in France. Its inclusion was also a timely reminder of the following Monday night's film, *The Evil Dead*.

The last film in the programme tonight was billed as "an homage to Olivia de Havilland" and was *Hush*. *Hush Sweet Charlotte* and I'm really only mentioning it here because its French title had myself and fellow *Starburst* contributor Phil Edwards in fits of hysterical laughter all evening. It was *Chut Chut Chut Charlotte*!

13/11/82 SATURDAY

Due to the mob scenes outside the cinema last night, (we were thankfully oblivious inside), there were lots of police patrolling outside and in the foyer. What is

surprising is that this has occurred so early as it usually happens on the last weekend, i.e. last year's *Mad Max* and the most extreme example of all, when *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was shown a few years back.

Expectations were high for tonight's movie. The trade's bible, *Variety*, had reviewed *The Slumber Party Massacre* in glowing terms and it held interest in being the first feminist stalk and slash film as it was written and directed by women. These hopes were dashed within minutes. This Roger Corman quickie, written by Rite Mee Brown a well-known lesbian activist and directed by Amy Jones who edited both *Corvette Summer* and *Hollywood boulevard*, is supposedly a comedy but in lampooning the *Halloween* clone cycle that is so much a parody to begin with, its purpose is self-defeating. Originally on the shelf at New World as *Sleepless Nights*, storyline nothing happens apart from some overage teenage girls deciding to give a party where their boyfriends are barred and therefore laying themselves wide open to a driller killer on the loose. After the eighth, (or was it the 80th?) false alarm involving voyeurs and other harmless scares, the psycho grinds into the girls with his phallic 18 inch power instrument until the next door neighbour cuts it down to size in the only borderline feminist statement contained in the picture. Otherwise the lapses in logic and narrative that asks us, among other things, to accept that a body in the fridge will only be discovered on the third successive opening of its door, destroy any inspired lunacy such a premise should have but, judging by the failure of *Saturday the 14th*, *Pandemonium* and *National Lampoon's Class Reunion*, rarely seems to achieve. So it's a case of Nice Poster! Shame about the film, and just see the trailer instead.

The Slumber Party Massacre got well deserved short shrift from the Rex audience but they settled down to watch the Hammer retro-duo of *Frankenstein Created Woman* and *Demons of the Mind*, the latter film never released in France. Die-hards will have to miss their last metro to see this

14/11/82 SUNDAY

One of the expected highlights of the Festival, the Michael Crichton written and directed film *Looker* held the audience entranced with its complex and audacious plot tonight. Its failure to open both in France and Britain because of poor box-office returns in America is inexplicable considering the originality and flair poured into every frame. Three cover-girl models who have attended Albat Finney's plastic surgery clinic have died mysterious deaths after work. Finney decides to keep tabs on the fourth model, Susan Day, and uncovers a plot to hypnotise the nation via scientifically accurate subliminal advertising to, at first, accept specific household goods moving on to elect the next President. *Looker*, which started life with producer Irwin Yablans as a comedy-thriller before being financed by the Ladd Company, deserves far more space than I can give to it here. Its visual inventiveness is nothing short of staggering whether it's the light gun that strobes into displacing the hours of their day – a device that gives editor Carl Kress marvellous opportunities to confound the viewer – or the fabulous stunt of a model falling to her death and landing on the top of a car. There are a lot of loose ends admittedly, the result of studio interference, but any criticisms I could level are swept aside by Michael Crichton's sheer talent for unusual story-telling. The witty climax is well worth the admission price alone as it is set in a high-tech television studio where the protagonists fighting to the death don't realise they are surrounded by computer animated visuals which are being viewed by the press on closed circuit television. I took a lot of delight in finding *Looker* so thrilling and involving. Somebody please release it in the U.K. soon.

Jack Clayton's *The Innocents* was next followed by *Memoirs of a Survivor*, David Gledwell's British Film Institute backed film that opened in Britain via EMI early last year. *Starburst* didn't cover it at the time – probably no-one could keep awake long enough – as it is a worthy but needlessly obscure adaptation of the

Doris Lessing novel about D. Julie Christie, after some future social upheaval has resulted in the breakdown of all the amenities of civilisation. In her imagination she passes through the wall of her apartment where she sees there symbolically mirrors the life of 14 year old Emily put in her care before a giant egg appears heralding the approach of a new dawn for all concerned. *Parallels to 2001* are pertinent, but only just and it is hard not to remain anything but aloof from the on screen pretentiousness. Walkouts by the dozen were occurring as the film was unspooling so I'm convinced it will win a prize from the Celebrity Jury as it is culture with a capital K.

15/11/82 MONDAY

Tonight's the night the faithful have been waiting for the first public screening of Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead* which has attracted a lot of publicity here and has had the grapevine working overtime. As a result the cinema is in pandemonium and when Raimi himself appears on stage with co-producer Rober Tapert, does a somersault and snaps a picture, the crowd go berserk. I have already written about *The Evil Dead* in cinema so I don't really want to repeat myself except to say that I believe it to be the most important and exciting debut in the exploitation/horror field since *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* it is a witty, repulsive and scary in equal measures. Raimi may be upset that he has been misquoted in saying he want to be the new Spielberg, but on the strength of *The Evil Dead*, that they may well prove to be no mean overstatement. Watching this film with the Rex audience was the nearest thing to *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* experience I have encountered and the cheers that greeted the end titles were well deserved for all concerned.

That old Festival favourite *Curse of the Werewolf* was dragged out yet again for the insatiable Tarance Fisher brigade followed by a retrospective highlight for the British connection. An uncut print of Mario Baba's 1963 *La Frusta e il Corpo* which was heavily censored in both versions to play the U.K. and America as *Night is the Phantom and What!* respectively. This ravishing sado-masochistic classic is mainly endless wanderings through crypts and bedrooms as Dalila Lav dremes of her dead fantasy lover Christopher Lea, but along with Riccardo Frade's *The Terror of Dr Hickcock* proof that even in the early '60s, Italian directors were handling saucy plots and making them perfectly palatable with superior lighting and production values. Virtually unseen today, *The Whip and the Body* is the type of film I wish the Festival would show more of, but then suppose the reverse is true for the French over Hammer films. Thanks to Lucas Balbo, editor of *Nostalgie* magazine, (formerly *Heretic*) one of the best glossy fanzines France has on offer, for translating the finer points of dialogue.

16/11/82 TUESDAY

Another world premiere tonight - James Robertson's *Superstition*, formerly *The Witch*, and made over a period of a year while financing was constantly being sought. Unfortunately, this all shows as it was one of the ropiest films on offer. The poor excuse for a plot is a jumble of flashbacks and ideas that peter out only to get hastily introduced in an effort to make the film seem a cohesive whole. It concerns a witch drowned in 1692 and how her spirit still dominates the succession of houses, and inhabitants, built on Mill Road, the spot where she died. *Superstition's* unoriginal nature of a dire to kill all and sundry off one by one on a series of less-than-remarkable, tar-mossed scenes. The best is a circular saw bounce off its bit, roll along the floor and embed itself in a priest's chest. The other murders do not hold the same novel appeal. What with a policeman who never seems to stop working as he is in every scene, a demented watcher in the woods and her mute son and James Houghton who plays a priest forever carrying a large crucifix around which brings new meaning to the phrase "we all have our crosses to bear", this film under "Destination Video".

The less said about the film *Bells* the better too. Already reported on by our intrepid nouveau Parisien

Tony Crowley, alarm bells ring the moment you see Michael Anderson credited as director and hear his quire, "*Bells is the Jaws of the telephone*". Typically he buries a basically interesting idea with his usual blend of flat and uninteresting direction. The film elicited screams, from the audience, of "Assassinate Alain Schlockoff" as if unfolded the story of how conservationist Richard Chamberlain tries to track down a crazed killer who turns telephone receivers into combustible deathtraps. With no real twists or surprises my one word review would require changing the "e" in *Bells* to another vowel. So there!

And so on to another Hammer favourite *Quatermass and the Pit* translated from the French title as just *Monsters from Space*.

17/11/82 WEDNESDAY

The evening opened with two shock pieces of news. One was that Sam Raimi had had his life threatened as Alain Schlockoff had shown a clip from *The Evil Dead* on the tv news which had jammed the station's switchboard with complaints. The second was just disturbing. Dario Argento's new film *Tenebrae* was not going to close the Festival. Although Argento personally wanted it screened in Paris, the French distributor had pulled it in favour of the Avoriaz Festival in January which would be near its opening date and therefore generate more publicity. How galling to learn then that the film had just broken Italian box office records and that it was by all accounts Argento's most stunning film.

The whole evening was a washout after that. *Le Monde Delirant* of Jose Mojica Marins was a short documentary on the eccentric Brazilian director whose films like *Ritual De Sadiques* have a lot in common with the work of Herschell Gordon Lewis but have never been shown in Britain. The Brazilians should learn that a documentary is not just letting a still camera stay unchecked on its subject who is in this instance passionately raving about Art and waving his grotesquely long fingernails in the air.

Piranha II is a film I have already dealt with in these pages and have honestly no desire to relive the experience.

The Voyage Magique was the only french film on show in the Festival this year and was a stop-motion short retelling the tale of Orpheus in the Underworld. Although beautiful to look at, even ten minutes it seemed too long. It was directed by Jean-Manuel Coste who scored heavily at the Festival a few years ago with another similar short, *La Tendresse des Maudits*.

Next was, for the first time in years, a complete full stereo version of Jules Verne's *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* and the most interesting thing to note now about Henry Levin's film is how much Spielberg and Lucas owe to it for *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. So hold that in mind the next time you see *Journey* on television.

18/11/82 THURSDAY

Italian film star Howard Ross is here tonight to introduce the French premiere of Lucio Fulci's *The New York Ripper*. Hardly very well known, Ross braved the crowds and said all the right things but it was obvious everyone missed Fulci himself. Fulci is almost the patron saint of the Festival and has been a regular visitor in the last couple of years but location work in Spain on his new film *Conquest* meant he couldn't make it this time around. I have also written at length about *The New York Ripper* and I was very interested to see how Fulci's public would react to a different brand of giallo film. Surprisingly he seems to have moved into an area they don't particularly like, whereas speaking personally it is the type of Italian film I like best. By the way, I can now say for sure that the ends tie up and the clues as to the Ripper's identity are there for all to see.

Shogun Assassin which I have again written about was followed by the Czechoslovakian comedy film *Tajemství Hradu V Karpatech* (*The Mystery of the Carpathian Castle*), which was screened in the presence of that country's cultural ambassador. The film is a throwback to parody for director Oldrich Lipsky. His 1964 film *Joe Limonade* leaped westerns and here his target is the horror genre

aimed at the children's market. The story concerns an opera singer who goes to Carpathia to discover what really happened to his ex-girlfriend. What happened is that she is the spearhead of a mad doctor's experiments into prolonging life. Obvious jokes crop up with regularity - Chateau Dracula wine, a man who smokes a cigarette and blows the smoke from his ears and a would-be assassin who is diverted by a pornographic picture concealed in his victim's beard. It's all rather juvenile but certainly not the bore of all time most of us were expecting.

19/11/82 FRIDAY

Director Tom McLoughlin makes an impressive entrance to announce the world premiere of his film *One Dark Night* in front of the screaming hordes tonight. His Marcel Marceau training obviously holding him in good stead, he comes on stage like a robot controlled by his girlfriend Nancy and ends his short interview by saying he will always make genre pictures which pleases the crowd enormously. McLoughlin's major claim to fame is that he was the *beet* in *Prophecy*, and *One Dark Night* (alternatively known as *Rest in Peace* and *Night in the Crypt*), is his directorial debut and the first film released by Burt Reynolds' newly formed distribution company, ComWorld Features.

I wish the film itself had been as impressive as his on stage entrance. It starts off superbly but soon gets bogged down in its own all too formula High School jinks concept. The police are called in to investigate the strange death of a famed psychic, Karl Raymer. He has been found in his apartment under bizarre circumstances. Cutlery and crockery are found embedded in the walls and the closet contains a number of teenage corpses. He is taken to be interred in the exact mausoleum that three college girls have chosen as the venue for Meg Tilley's initiation test into their sorority. As she prepares to be down for the night, the girls secretly set about scaring her at regular intervals not realising that Raymer was a psychic vampire feeding off the young to help in his selfish experiments of experiencing death and how their Halloween japes will mingle with Raymer's ability to reanimate corpses. The psychic vampire idea is a good one and well introduced in a very eerie slow-motion opening but McLoughlin seems to do nothing with it except build up to a pedestrian climax that lacks impact, defused by the low-budget zombies, courtesy of the Burmans who were instrumental in helping finance the project. Having the dead corpses glide is an idea that refuses to work but I can appreciate how much McLoughlin did achieve on a very limited budget. It's just unfortunate that too many smart-alex teenagers have come our way recently and that the mausoleum setting only keeps bringing detrimental comparisons with *Phantom* to mind. It was a brave attempt to try and work the film along similar lines laid down by John Carpenter but *One Dark Night* really did need a more visceral approach to lift it out of the ordinary where it now, all too sad, belongs. The film prompted one outburst from an irate member of the audience who said words to the effect of, "This is rubbish. *Raiders* and *Pothead* are better." Obviously.

The 1957 Mexican film, Fernando Mendez' *El Vampiro* was the retrospective tonight followed by a little seen 1975 drive-in movie called *The Legendary Curse of Lemora*, which now has interest as it was written and directed by *Eating Raul* co-scripter, Richard Blackburn. After a prologue where we see a gangster shooting his wife and his little girl, Lila, taken into custody by a priest, the film only takes place at night. When Lila is contacted by a stranger called Lemora we are thrust headlong into the carnal rites of a vampiric sect in which she holds the vital key for their survival. Constructed like a nightmare with atmosphere laden blue photography, *Lemora* is an effective, if low budget, curiosity.

20/11/82 SATURDAY

"Med Night" is the title the festivities come under tonight as the audience are invited to wear fancy dress and go to a party being held in the basement Rex Club at midnight and they begin with *The* ▶



RELAXATION +
DANCING AND CONVERSATION WITH
GIRLS • GIRLS • GIRLS
IN FURIOUS KIDNES
COME UPSTAIRS AND LOOK AROUND

CLASS OF 1984



Preview by Tony Crawley

I understand there have been quite a few re-makes of my Blackboard Jungle (1955) — not done by me! They wanted me to do one at MGM called The Blackboard Jungle Boys Return. But when I've finished with a subject — I've finished with that subject!" — Richard Brooks, 1982.

Blackboard Jungle is the film that made Richard Brooks. He gave Glenn Ford a crew-cut, took a bunch of kids off the streets of New York (Paul Mazursky, Vic Morrow among them) and made a savage indictment of the American educational system. He also had, Bill Haley and the Comets ripping up the soundtrack with Jim Meyers' "Rock Around The Clock" and changed the face — well, the pace — of movies.

The latest re-make — not, of course, that its director agrees it's a rip — is *Class of 1984*. This has Alice Cooper on the track, chanting "I Am The Future".

This is progress?

Mark Lester co-wrote and directed and re-tread, American director Mark L. Lester, that is, the man behind such movies as *Tricia's Wedding*, high on Nixon's hate-list, and *Stunts*, so high on Burt Reynolds' love-list, he swiftly copied it with *Hooper*. That Mark Lester. Not the "Please sir, I want some more" Mark Lester of *Oliver* fame. Wherever he is now, he must be old enough at 24 to be playing one of the other Lester's schoolteachers here.

Then again, he's too wise, perhaps, for that. Perry King is the heroic teach. Instead. With a beard, not a crew-cut. Perry King is the radio Han Solo. Otherwise, he's very much a TV actor: *Aspen*, *Captains and Kings*, *The Quest*. Plus the occasional rank film like *Mandingo* and Andy Warhol's *Bad*. (Isn't he, though?) And he's supported here at Abe Lincoln High (transplanted in cheaper Canada) by minuscule tele-names like Merrie Lynn Ross, from the daytime soap, *General Hospital*, fiendish Timothy Van Patten from *The White Shadow* series and Roddy McDowall who's guested and/or starred in just about every tele-series known to man.

Class of 1984 is not very much of a TV movie. It's haemoglobin-count is too high. It's a blood-letter. It's the bitterest of mayhem in what passes for halls of education in the America these days... and not just there. It's rough. It's savage. It's brutal. It's horrendous.

But as top French critic Robert Chazal, phrased it, it's ridiculous violence. What we call exploitation. Gross-out time!

Mark Lester, a most handsome and personable young film-maker, tells me he likes to find a kernel of social comment in every film he makes. This one started when he visited a former teacher of his at his old high school in the safe and secure middle-class San Fernando Valley... and couldn't believe his eyes.

"When I'd gone there, it was one of the most academic high schools in the city of Los Angeles. Now they had no more debate classes. No more international relations classes. Kids were roaming the halls without shirts on. Making all kinds of noise. Kids with knives. Security guards were patrolling everywhere. Windows were all smashed. I couldn't believe it. I said to my old teacher, 'What's going on?' He said, 'Well you can hardly teach kids anymore. Give a kid an F, and he stabs you!'"

"I thought, My God if this is happening in San Fernando Valley, what can it be like in Harlem? I did an enormous amount of research — visited about twenty schools — and discovered this was a widespread problem. In fact, the California D.A. is presenting a bill to

make it unconstitutional for kids to go to public schools anymore — because it's endangering their lives!"

This much is sadly, well enough chronicled in countless tele-documentaries, news items and governmental reports. Still, it was news to Lester, which says a lot about L.A. people. He decided to make his next film about it. That's when he threw all his social commentary down the tubes and ordered a supply of blood capsules and fake plasma.

While it cannot have anything but an element of social truth to it, Lester's movie is a kind of *The Warriors Go To School*... *The Blackboard Jungle '82*. Okay, well, '84. "Remember," says Lester, "the '84 kids are already in school. They're gonna graduate in a year or so. Okay, the film is outrageous. Gangs terrorising the school, selling drugs, hiring hookers, stabbing students, fire-bombing teachers' cars... teachers having to carry guns and all. But it's not fictional at all. In fact, everything in the movie is from actual incidents except the last ten minutes."

Or where Lester's producing of *Tobe Hooper's Funhouse* obviously did him no good at all...

This bone-crunching finale is *Death Wish III*. Perry King — the new music teacher, married, of course, and his wife is pregnant, of course — finally turns on his tormentors. He chases them around the halls of learning and starts giving it back... Now there's not much in a school that a teacher can use to defend himself with, you might say. Hah! Remember *Straw Dogs*?

King starts in the carpentry room... and why there's a circular saw, barely seen on screen since the days of Pearl White in *The Perils of Pauline*. Bingo, zingo — off comes one kid's arm. Splash, just like that. Ketchup flies like a riot in McDonald's. The armless kid is not yet harmless, so King goes for an encore.

Then, there's the auto-shop. All American high-schools have auto-shops Hell, we know that. We saw *Grease*. No singing 'n' dancing here though as King grabs a welder aims it at a pool of petrol and torches No 2. A crowbar lays low the massive No 3. And why should No 4, get off just because she's a girl (Lisa Langlois)? She drives a car straight at Teach — and really does for No 3, instead and — voila! — the car on a hoist above her tumbling down. Pancakes, too?

That leaves only the leader. Timothy Van Patten, half-brother, if you're interested, of Dick and Joyce, which means half-uncle of Vincent (from *Rock 'n' Roll High School*) Tim's blond and real mean. He's the re-tread for Vic Morrow in the Brooks film; there can be no substitute for Sidney Poitier, it seems.

Tim's on the roof with his shining switchblade at Mrs King's throat. And King, looking as if he's fought the Vietnam war single-handed, makes him a real half-uncle. Crash! Straight through the sky-light. The kid grabs hold of a beam. He begs for help. The teacher reaches out a hand. Hell, he's only a kid, right? With gratitude, the kid slashes at the hand with a razor. That does it! Teach punches the kid straight in the grinning mush. Pa! He smashes through the stained-glass roof panel, gets caught up with a rope and hangs... high above the stage below where the school orchestra is performing well enough with King twiddling the beton.

So exits No 5. With, but of course, a bedlam of cheers... as greeted each of the five slayings from every audience I've seen the film with, from Cannes to Deauville. Like, I say, it's *Death Wish* all over... Just less so, somehow. More flash. And trash.

Mark Lester, surprise, surprise, does not agree with me. "I say this film will do for high schools what *Jaws* did for the water. They'll be afraid to go!"



A scene from Australia's
Turkey Shoot.



Uncanny one of the few Amicus-type entologies I loathe with a vengeance. Screenwriter Michel Parry has come from London to prassant it and although it seems to be favourably received, I find it appallingly inept. One can see why Milton Subosty has gone on record as saying he will never work with director Denis Heroux again.

Frankenstein and the Monster from Hell is next up followed by the unavailing of *Full Moon High* which turned out to be another gem from cult director Larry Cohen. *Full Moon High* seems to have fared worse than even *Looker* in having practically no distribution anywhere in the world and it really is hard to see why as it is a fairly consistent comedy very much like *Love at First Bite*. *Cohen wrote produced and directed this pastiche of I Was a Teenage Werewolf* on his characteristic pitch of high level hysteria and I must admit to laughing like a drain until the final ten minutes where, upon the introduction of Alan Arkin, the film falls apart. Still as with all of Cohen's work it is well worth the effort of tracking down if you are given the opportunity. It opens in the late '50s as Tony is taken out of Full Moon High School to accompany his father on a CIA mission to Rumania where he is bitten by a werewolf and cursed to remain a teenager forever and go on the rampage at each successive full moon. Ed McMahon, Johnny Carson's sidekick, is superb as Tony's A-Bomb paranoid father who gets killed in his feli-out shelter when the bullet intended for his son ricochets around the metal walls. Twenty years pass and Tony returns to his old college where he has the dream of fulfilling his early football team aspirations but although he finds his school pals older, they are certainly not any wiser and the comedy primarily comes from these contrasts. The comedy works on a multitude of levels - straight out satire, broad comedy and successful lampooning of past horror hits like *Carrie* and inevitably *Psycho*. The one liners are all crisp: "It's my time of month" Tony explains to his girlfriend and gives a dialogue of how eight silver bullets aren't enough to kill him in these days of inflation. There are a number of brilliantly staged set pieces, one set in the disco where the music is so loud that a stonad couple who try and explain that they've just seen a warwolf, instead instigate a new dance craze, and when Tony asks his girlfriend to strap him to the bad so he can film his transformation as proof positive she misreads this as a new kink to experiment with. There's a great visual gag of showing the passing of time as portraits of American Presidents are replaced on a wall but cleverest of all is Tony's final transformation scene - or rather, lack of it. Knowing he could never compete with the special effects on *The Howling of An American Werewolf in London*, Cohen has a policeman shoot the camera lens by mistake and in the ensuing panic to change it we have described to us the incredible effects we are supposedly missing. Cohen's ability to sustain all this on a budget of a quarter of a million dollars is nothing less than miraculous making this film a joy to watch.

21/11/82 SUNDAY

There are cheers from the audience when Donald Pleasence's name comes up during the credits of *Alone in the Dark*. He plays the head of a lunatic asylum that keeps its really dangerous criminals, like Jack Palance and Martin Landau, under electronic imprisonment and surveillance on the third floor of a New Jersey Mental Hospital. Guess what? Yes, a power failure means they escape along with two other inmates and head towards the home of doctor Potter who Palance blames for the murder of the doctor he replaced. At the Potter's, the baby sitter has already fallen victim and the child rapist has got his eyes on his 13 year old daughter. *Alone in the Dark* is really nothing special and against all the other similar films in the Festival, it played rapidly. Sole point of interest are an extremely promising opening dream sequence, an apparition that lasts seconds credited to Tom Savini and an ending set during a punk-rock gig that is dated but makes a nice statement on who is really crazy in today's society. Otherwise it's the same repetitive mish-mash of all the other hundreds of films we've seen along the same lines. *Alone in the Dark*, which nobody is by the way, is technically

proficient although rumous has it that first time director Jack Sholder was asking his leading actors for helpful hints.

Then it was time for the "Film Surprise" and when it was announced that it was to be Riccardo Freda's latest offering, *Murder Obsession*, (unconscious) hopes were high, after all Freda was the past-master of such classics as *The Terror of Dr Hitchcock*, *Catlike and The Spectre* and along with Mario Bava had put the Italian Gothiqua cinema on the International map. How devastating it was then to see Freda trying to film an '80s giallo subject in the old style of his '60s Kray-Ebing masterpieces with a few laughable concessions to explicit sex and gore. Stefano Patrizzi plays a famous film star who blames himself for his father's murder. When he takes some friends to visit his mother in her ancient chateau which he intends to use as a background for some publicity photos, his guests start being murdered one by one until the incomprehensible motive of incest is introduced along with a series of red herrings, a false ending and the most fatuous dream sequence ever put on film showing a girl being raped by a giant spider so fake it had the audience hooting with derision. If I could honestly have found something I like in the film I would be weeping to Freda's defence, but I couldn't. The acting is static and wooden from Laura (*Black Emmanuelle*) Gemser, ex Raquel Welch co-star John Richardson and Anita Strindberg and the last straw is the introduction of satanism as an all out device to keep their interest perked. Even I, who gives Italian horror cinema a lot of critical leeway, had to admit that this was one of the worst I've seen in years and how sad to report on Freda's obviously disinterested involvement.



The Sitges Festival prizewinner, Australia's *Next of Kin* proved to be somewhat of a disappointment too. It is extremely well directed by Tony Williams but all his sub-Argento flash isn't enough to carry or promote interest in the very ordinary story. Having said that, the last ten minutes make the rather boring waiting around for something to happen well worth it. Linda Stevens has been left the old Montclair house in her mother's will which due to times of hardship has been turned into an old people's home. As Linda begins to study the accounts and starts realising all is not what it seems, various residents are found drowned in their baths. So what is going on? And where does her boyfriend fit into the puzzle? Or the suspicious housekeeper and her strange doctor companion? I won't tell you because that really is the sum total of my surprise. Tony Williams uses every directional device known to grab attention and there is a lot of effective slow motion photography. But even with modernist musician Klaus Schulze's disco score, with the lack of any real thrills, I found it clesly looking but ultimately empty exercise. That is until those last ten minutes!

22/11/82 MONDAY

Prizewinner's Day. But first we have to wade through the two remaining films in competition. *Mutant* is now what Roger Corman's *Forbidden World* is called. Using sets from *Galaxy of Terror* and left over Skotak brother's footage from *Battle Beyond the Stars*, this *Alien* rip-off is described by director Allan Holzman as "Punk-rock" horror. That's as may be but it really is shameless in its use of *Alien*'s central idea, although here read semi-human metamorph that has been implanted in the womb of a scientist in a research station on the planet Xerbie that goes on the rampage. Although the metamorph changes shape it is never far removed from ooking Giger-esque alid prepares to turn into protein for its basic needs the dumbest and most inept group of individuals we have

ever been asked to sympathise with. Still the gore is gory, the shocks assembly line and the film mercifully short, so I can see its appeal in some quarters. I much preferred *Inseminad*. It does have one sequence however destined to mark it a classic of sorts. Yes folks, for the first time right before your eyes, see an alien monster eat a cancer tumour and throw up on screen!

And so to the last horror film, *The Last Horror Film*. There never seems to have been a moment in the last couple of years when we haven't been aware that *The Last Horror Film* was being made so actually watching it at last proved to be something of a strange experience. What with court cases flying about and all the extra footage needed to turn it into a haphazard comedy, the film is a hit and miss affair that will split audiences into two factions. One will say it is intentionally funny, and the other that its humour springs from the mindbogglingly stupid scenes that ax-porn director David Winters has seen fit to flash out the non-top with. Caroline Munro plays horror queen Jana Batas who finds all the personnel connected with her latest opus "Scream" are being killed while on a promotional tour of the Cannes Film Festival. Who else can it be apart from sweetly Joe Spinell. Jana Batas' number one fan? Well, you'll be surprised! Joe Spinell turns in a performance that is even surlier than his appearance in *Maniac* if that's at all possible and never has a film pandered to the real life cult persona of someone like Caroline Munro than this does. She looks as fabulous as ever of course, though it is pushing it a bit to make us believe she is up for a best actress award, and unless I'm very much mistaken she has been dubbed again. Could this be a case of "Chut Chut Chare Caroline"? The daft and unnecessary exposition, like the publicity stunt motive, give away somewhat to the very interesting glimpse we got of the Cannes Festival in full swing and some almost *Carry On* inspired moments. What gora thara is, is ill-timed and unconvincing although the film within a film shocks will definitely have the faint-hearted feeling queasy. I found the lip service the film pays to recent assassinations and similar attempts, like Lennon, Raagan and The Pope as a device to socially explain the apaal of horror movies warped and slightly distasteful, but then audiences pe of mind is not exactly what David Winters was aiming for. The music written by Munro's husband Judd Hamilton and the very neat twist ending aside, the only thing I can honestly say I really liked about ha film is Joe Spinell's mother who turns in a performance that is John Waters starlet at its best. *The Last Horror Film* is a laugh, but not much else. Incidentally the phone number that Spinell rings from the Carlton lobby is actually his own. So make a note of it and ring him up to complain.

And that, apart from a newly struck print of *Godzilla* which closed the Festival, was it.

And the prize-winners?

Best Film - *Next of Kin* (Not surprising really and it seemed a popular choice)
Best Screenplay - *Bells* (What?!)
Best Director - Sam Raimi for *The Evil Dead* (Well deserved)
Best Special Effects - *Mutant* (There wasn't really anything else to give to)
Best Music - Klaus Schulze for *Next of Kin* (Cheers echoed around the Rex)
Best Actor - Joe Spinell in *The Last Horror Film* (I'm lost for words)
Best Actress - Mary Spinell in *The Last Horror Film* (All credibility lost there)
The Public's Choice - *The Evil Dead* (Hmmm.)
And the Critic's Prize, which myself and Phil Edwards had a hand in, was split between *The Evil Dead* and *Looker* with the latter winning by an edge. Much to our chagrin I must admit as we were always led to believe that the prize were awarding was to encourage new talent and as much as we both liked *Looker*, Michael Crichton did not need any kudos from us.

And so ends the relentless ten day event that the Festival has become. As we say goodbye to the Rex and the people that have been our close acquaintances for what seems an eternity, it is now time for the Paracetamol and the resolution "Never Again". Well, not until next year anyway.

I don't know about you weak-willed lot out there but I kept myself pure for *E.T.* Dirty old men shuffled up to me in the street and whispered "Pssst! Wanna buy a video of *E.T.*?" but I shunned all their advances. "Away with you, you curs!" I cried. "It's *E.T.* on the big screen for me!" Well actually, the screen I ended up seeing it on wasn't that big, nor was the print in exactly pristine condition.



they'd had a quiet little weep towards the end. This unnerved me, I must admit. I mean I have my reputation to think of (the only time I have quiet little weeps is when I get my bank statements) and it wouldn't look good to be seen blubbing away during some stupid movie.

Well, did I cry? Nope, thank goodness. I did get a lump in my throat at one stage but that was caused by a peanut (supplied courtesy of UIP. Actually that was all they gave me, just the one peanut. I'm not complaining, mind, but...).

So what did I think of it (the movie, not the peanut) I hear you all demanding. I enjoyed it, I admit, but I'd need to see it again before I could be *objective* about it as a film. The problem is that *E.T.* comes with such a big anticipatory emotional charge (especially if you've had to wait 6 months for it, but I'm not complaining, no...) that it's difficult to sort out one's true reactions to it with just one viewing.

I must confess, however, that I wasn't too keen on the beginning with all the little aliens pottering about in the shrubbery like so many illuminated garden gnomes. And when ET starts being chased by the Man With the Keys and Friends failed by the previously to notice an alien spaceship, resembling a ten story ornament off a Christmas tree, sitting in plain view on the side of the hill...

And if pushed I would also confess to finding the medical scenes towards the end somewhat embarrassing. With them Spielberg unfortunately crosses the thin line between pathos and bathos (and the shots of a very rubbery-looking ET receiving heart massage are downright ludicrous).

Otherwise Spielberg doesn't put a foot wrong. *E.T.* may be no more than a reworking of an old *Lassie* movie (*Lassie Phone Home?*) as more than one critic has pointed out but it's made with a skill and conviction that places it light years beyond the old fashioned Hollywood tear-jerkers of that kind. And, most importantly, it possesses a marvellous sense of humour that saves it, in the main, from becoming unbearably sentimental.

Finally, one of the things I enjoyed about *E.T.* was spotting references to *War of the Worlds*. Spielberg has admitted that the little Martian in the wrecked farmhouse sequence was the original inspiration for ET (See Tony Crawley's interview with Spielberg in *cinema* 6) but I was agreeably surprised to see that he actually repeats in *E.T.* the scene from *War of the Worlds* where the Martian's long, three-fingered hand reaches in out of the frame to touch Anne Robinson on the shoulder (it's where ET taps the boy on the shoulder after hiding in his bedroom).

In fact ET itself resembles th cobra-head pieces that protrude from the Maritan war machines in the Pal movie (no really, I'm serious. Go look for yourselves), and I think I spotted another direct reference to them in the scene where we see the men in the fumigation suits appear over the top of the hill - before they come into view Spielberg holds the shot on a street lamp that looks remarkably like one of the Martian cobra-heads.

But perhaps I'm just starting to crack up. Caused, no doubt, by the strain of having to wait all those months to see *E.T.* (but, no, no, I'm not complaining)...

Scotty, I think it's that time of the month again. Beam me up, laddie, and this time don't leave any bits behind.

I saw it in a tiny Wardour Street preview theatre (the tiniest) courtesy of those marvellous people at UIP (the same marvellous people who, by holding back the release of *E.T.* in this country for 6 months created the whole *E.T.* pirate video industry and thus lost themselves a considerable amount of money). It was at the fag-end of their series of previews (by this time everybody I knew had been invited to see the movie at least twice so UIP had no choice but to finally give in and invite me too) as the condition of the print clearly showed. For awhile I thought I could see wires holding ET up but these turned out to be scratches on the film...

But I'm not complaining, UIP, *really!* It's just that you'd think those of use who kept ourselves pure for *E.T.* deserved a little better... (sniff).

Anyway it was all very exciting. Like being in an aeroplane waiting for take-off. The big question was - Would I Cry? You see, everyone I knew who'd seen it (and that included *everyone* I knew... I mean literally everybody had seen the thing before me, but please don't think I'm complaining) told me

I was interested to hear Steven Spielberg talking recently on *The South Bank Show* and saying that he liked to make films about mysterious happenings in the world before the mystery is explained away by science. I know what he means; how much more exciting it is to believe that UFOs really are spaceships piloted by little green men rather than meteorites, observation balloons or the planet Venus. How nice it would be to imagine that any one of us could penetrate to the heart of a tropical jungle and emerge with treasure from a lost temple rather than a galloping dose of dysentery or a poison dart in the posterior. The real world has a habit of turning out to be more mundane than we'd like. Or does it? I thought I'd look at some non-fiction titles this month, and overall they illustrate the principle that while truth may not be stranger than fiction, it's just as interesting in its own way.

The Science in Science Fiction (Michael Joseph, £10.95) has Peter Nicholls as its Central Editor. Nicholls also edited *The Encyclopedia of Science Fiction*, which is the best single volume reference work on the subject you could find. This new book is aimed at a more general audience, and although it's a coffee table book in size and format, it would be unfair to dismiss it as just that for the articles are lucid and informative. The basic scientific principles underlying much science fiction are outlined with reference to works of fiction in which they are employed. The book is well illustrated in both black and white and colour, with diagrams, charts and graphs to help the reader on his way. Concepts such as the theory of relativity and the nature of black holes really are quite mind-boggling, and the book also finds space to demolish the more loony ideas of von Daniken and his ilk.

I always feel that there's something rather gimmicky about books which aim to give you facts through the medium of fiction, but if it has to be done, this book is a good example of how it can be done properly. My only real complaint is a question of billing; only Nicholls is credited on the cover, but there are really three authors, with David Langford being responsible for 4 or the 12 chapters and Brian Stableford for 4½. Their contributions are scrupulously detailed on the inside back flap of the dustjacket, but the publishers should have put their names on the cover, too.

The Cosmic Serpent by Victor Clube and Bill Napier (Faber, £12.50) is a more scholarly book which at the same time is much more speculative, covering a remarkable range of subjects in under 300 pages. Subtitled "A Catastrophist View of Earth History", the basic thrust of the book is that the Earth has, in the past, been subject to more bombardments and close encounters by meteors and comets than is currently supposed and that these have profoundly affected geological, climatic and even historical processes on Earth. The authors argue that continual drift, ice Ages, the extinction of the dinosaurs and even many Biblical disasters such as the Flood could have been brought about by the impacts of large heavenly bodies; and they amass evidence which leads them to suggest a major revision of Ancient Egyptian chronology. It's all heady stuff which reads like a more respectable version of von Daniken and Velikovsky, even if style of writing is rather dry and academic at times. No doubt the authors are pressing their case

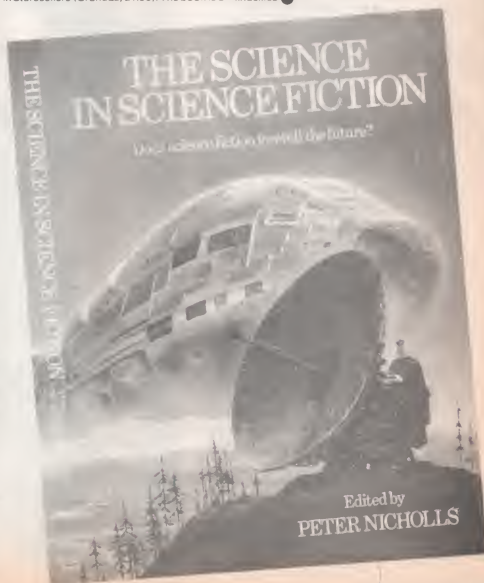
too strongly on some fronts, but too much imagination is always better than too little, and the book is already creating healthy controversy in scientific circles.

Reincarnation by Ian Wilson (Penguin, £2.50) is another fascinating book which investigates the claims of hypnotic regression into past lives. Wilson is a pretty scrupulous investigator who writes well, and he succeeded in convincing me that past lives recalled under hypnosis are usually fictional ones which are sometimes derived, without the subject's knowledge, from historical material which they read years ago and have consciously forgotten. This may be a disappointing conclusion for people who would like to believe that in a previous existence they may have been a marriage guidance counsellor to Henry VIII or Attila the Hun's speechwriter, but it leaves a different sort of mystery: why should people unconsciously invent these lives in the first place? Wilson suggests that it's something to do with the split nature of our brains and that the material probably comes from the left-brain, which deals more with imagery and intuition, rather than the right-brain, which seems to be the centre of conscious and analytical functions.

Another writer who deals with the split brain nature of human beings is Colin Wilson in *Starseekers* (Granada, £1.95). The book is a

history of astronomy from the building of the ancient megaliths to the latest theories on the origin of the universe, but Wilson also speculates that in ancient times the two functional halves of our brains were more in harmony than they are now and that we need to re-integrate them if we are to attain a proper sense of our place in the universe. Wilson sometimes has a tendency to present suppositions as facts, but he's always stimulating and readable.

Profiles of the Future by Arthur C. Clarke (Gollancz, £8.95) was first published in 1962, and this is the second revised edition, taking scientific developments of the last decade into account. I found it disappointing. Clarke is imaginative enough when contemplating future technological advances, but the material in the book is poorly organized, presented in a chatty style which sometimes tends to smugness, and is too blatantly aimed at an American audience, employing imperial units of measurement which will be of little help to British schoolchildren raised on the metric system. In addition the book has been badly proof-read, being littered with misprints and transposed lines. Even celebrities such as Clarke shouldn't be allowed to get away with such sloppiness, and the publishers also deserve a rap on the knuckles.



This month, a brief aside on *The Prisoner* from our regular columnist, Richard Holliss. *TV Zone* returns to its normal length next month.

Starburst reader Mike Jenner came up with a first regarding *The Prisoner* tv series. He has discovered a publication designed for students and teachers at secondary level who wish to explore at greater depth the many themes introduced by this popular show. The programme is split into an amazing thirty four half-hour segments for broadcasting in schools.

The tv company, Ontario Educational Communications Authority, also issue a programme guide to the series listing all seventeen episodes with a series of questions relating to each story. For example:

1) What is the significance of the apparently international nature of the Village?

2) Does the Prisoner really escape from the Village?

If you feel confident at answering these questions then the follow-up activities on page 23 of the Guide will certainly be of interest. For here is a chance to compare great literary works such as Poe's *The Pit* and the *Pendulum* and Kesey's *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* with tv series such as *77 Sunset Strip* and *Monty Python's Flying Circus*.

But for the more dedicated fan, the companion book, *The Prisoner Puzzle*, is a truly fascinating insight into the workings of the series and McGoohan's own thoughts on its production, many appearing in print for the first time. Perhaps what sums up all this incredible furure over *The Prisoner* to the student who feels he can't make the grade is the consolation he will get from McGoohan's answer to a question on page 1 from host Warner Troyer:

Troyer: "I suppose the first question is where the hell did the idea come from? How did you get started?"

McGoohan: "Boredom." ●



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THE MASK OF FU MANCHU



Feature by Alan Murdoch

The *Mask of Fu Manchu* was something of stylistic departure for MGM, when it appeared in 1932. After hiring Dracula director Tod Browning to film *Fräcks*, MGM production executive Irving Thalberg borrowed Universal contract player Boris Karloff for a foray into the world of the Saturday morning serial. The result was a fantasy classic.

When seen today, *The Mask of Fu Manchu* is marred by some terrible dialogue, though few can argue that the plot is imaginative and rattles along at a cracking pace, with the picture passing the finishing post at a very economical 70 minutes.

As the movie was screened recently by Channel 4, we'll resist delving too deeply into the plot. Suffice it to say that Fu Manchu (Boris Karloff) is intent on laying his hands upon the legendary mask and sword of Ghengis Khan. With these artifacts, Fu plans to incite the Asiatic people to rise up and follow him into world conquest. His old nemesis, Nayland Smith (Lewis Stone) discovers that an archeological expedition is about to set out in search of the relics. The leader of the expedition, Sir Lionel (Lawrence Grant) is captured by Fu and tortured in an attempt to make him reveal the whereabouts of the mask and sword. When he resists, Fu uses every wile in his repertoire to force the others to hand over the ex-property of his ancestor. The climax of the film comes when all the members of the expedition have been captured by Fu and are strapped into an assortment of torture devices. Each escapes and they manage to kill Fu before he can "baptise" his new sword with the blood of the young hero's fiancée. The sword ends up at the bottom of the ocean to prevent another Fu Manchu taking the place of the first.

Originally, the film was to have been directed by Charles Vidor. However, some time into the shooting schedule he was replaced by Charles Brabin. There was much executive interference and Brabin was ordered to re-shoot some scenes entirely. One example of this concerned the spiked torture machine — "the slender fingers of death". The script and the original footage called for Nayland Smith to be subjected to this horror. However, somebody in the front office at MGM decided that it would be much more thrilling to see the fat, perspiring Prof Von Berg (Jean Hersholt) struggling to escape the gleaming spikes than it would be to see Smith in the same predicament. All the stills clearly show Nayland Smith in the clutches of the device, when in the film it is Von Berg.

The most spectacular scene in the film, when Fu Manchu subjects the sword to an authenticity test using millions of volts of static electricity was not without its problems either. In this sequence, Fu was to catch a bolt of static lightning on his fingertip and transfer it to the hilt of the standing sword. Director Brabin called Ken Strickfaden, who had supplied the high voltage on *Frankenstein*, to rig





something up for his movie. Strickfaden fed a copper cable down the sleeve of Karloff's kimono, attaching one end to a false metal fingernail and plugging the other end directly into the MGM power supply. It was at this point that Karloff bid the bewildered cast and crew good-day and went home for the afternoon. Ever the professional, Strickfaden stepped into Karloff's now empty kimono, so as not to hold up shooting. "The electrical wizard stepped into

position and put his foot on a badly insulated arc-light cable. There was a tremendous flash and a noise like a sledge hammer felling an ox. Fuses blew all over the studio. Strickfaden flew six foot through the air and landed in an unconscious heap. Men have died for films by fire and falls. Now it seemed one had perished by electrocution. Frantic artificial respiration brought him round. Examination disclosed no more than a badly blistered toe."

But what did Strickfaden have to say on the matter? "Boy, am I lucky!" Mr Karloff's comment in unrecorded.

Certainly *The Mask of Fu Manchu* is one of the great forgotten classics of the thirties. It comes close to *Raiders of the Lost Ark* for thrills, spills and adventure and, despite some embarrassing lines of dialogue, still stands up well today. If you missed the recent airing, beg, borrow or steal a video copy of the film and see it for yourself. ➤





RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK AND THE MASK OF FU MANCHU: SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Many critics have claimed that the Lucas/Spielberg movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark* was based on the classic serials of fifty years ago, citing Secret Service in Darkest Africa as one of the prime influences. This may indeed be the case, but I would find it hard to believe that George and Steve didn't look at a copy of *The Mask of Fu Manchu* before beginning their labours on *Raiders*.

There are three key scenes in *Mask* that could fairly lay claim to having beaten *Raiders* to the punch.

1. The opening of the tomb of Ghengis Khan in *Mask* shares many of the aspects of the similar scene in *Raiders*. Both expeditions are searching for a weapon that, in the wrong hands, could spell the End of Everything. The set-ups of both scenes are similar, except that the nasty creatures in the tombs differ. In *Raiders* it is snakes (of course) and in *Mask* the hero, Terry Granville (Charles Starrett) discovers a tarantula spider lurking beneath the mask of Ghengis Khan.

2. The only supernatural events in both films occur fairly close to the end of the movies. *The Wrath of God* finale to *Raiders* is well-known. In *Mask* the statue of Ghengis Khan comes to life and hands the sword to its new master. It would seem that Ghengis approved of Fu's takeover bid.

3. As the power of God strikes down the Nazis in *Raiders*, the followers of Fu are also struck down by lightning in the closing moments. From above the great hall where Fu has assembled his generals, Nayland Smith sends a bolt of static electricity to finish off the rebellious yellow hordes. The electrical bolts that transfix the soldiers in *Raiders* and the Asiatic mob in *Mask* are so similar as to raise eyebrows.

There are many other similarities, but it is more fun if the viewer is to look them out for his/herself.

(An aside for the perverted: You'll probably love the scene in which the beautiful Fah Lo See (Myrna Loy) has Terry Granville whipped by two strapping black men, then has him taken to her bedroom, where she can tend to his injuries. Good, clean fun!)



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